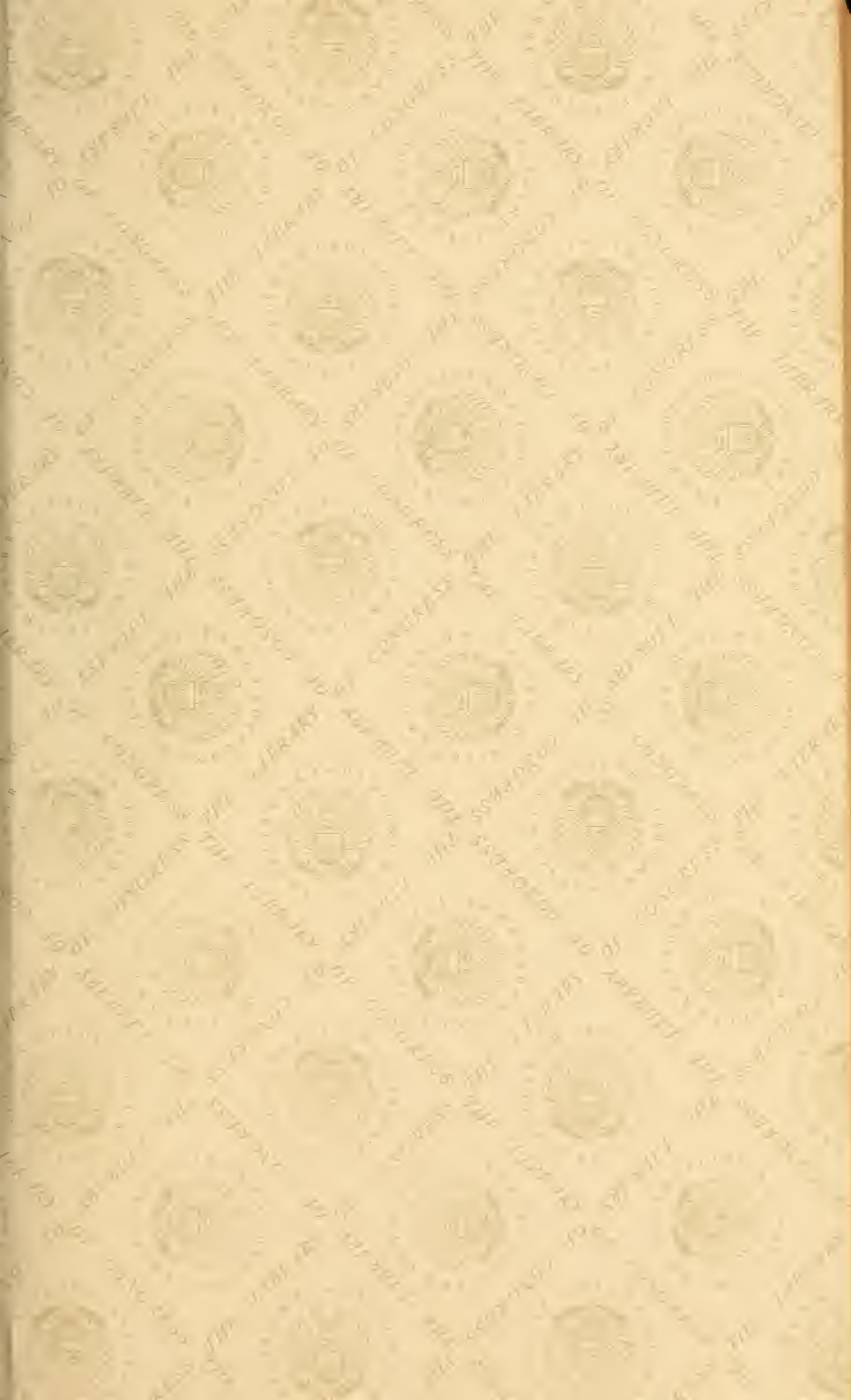
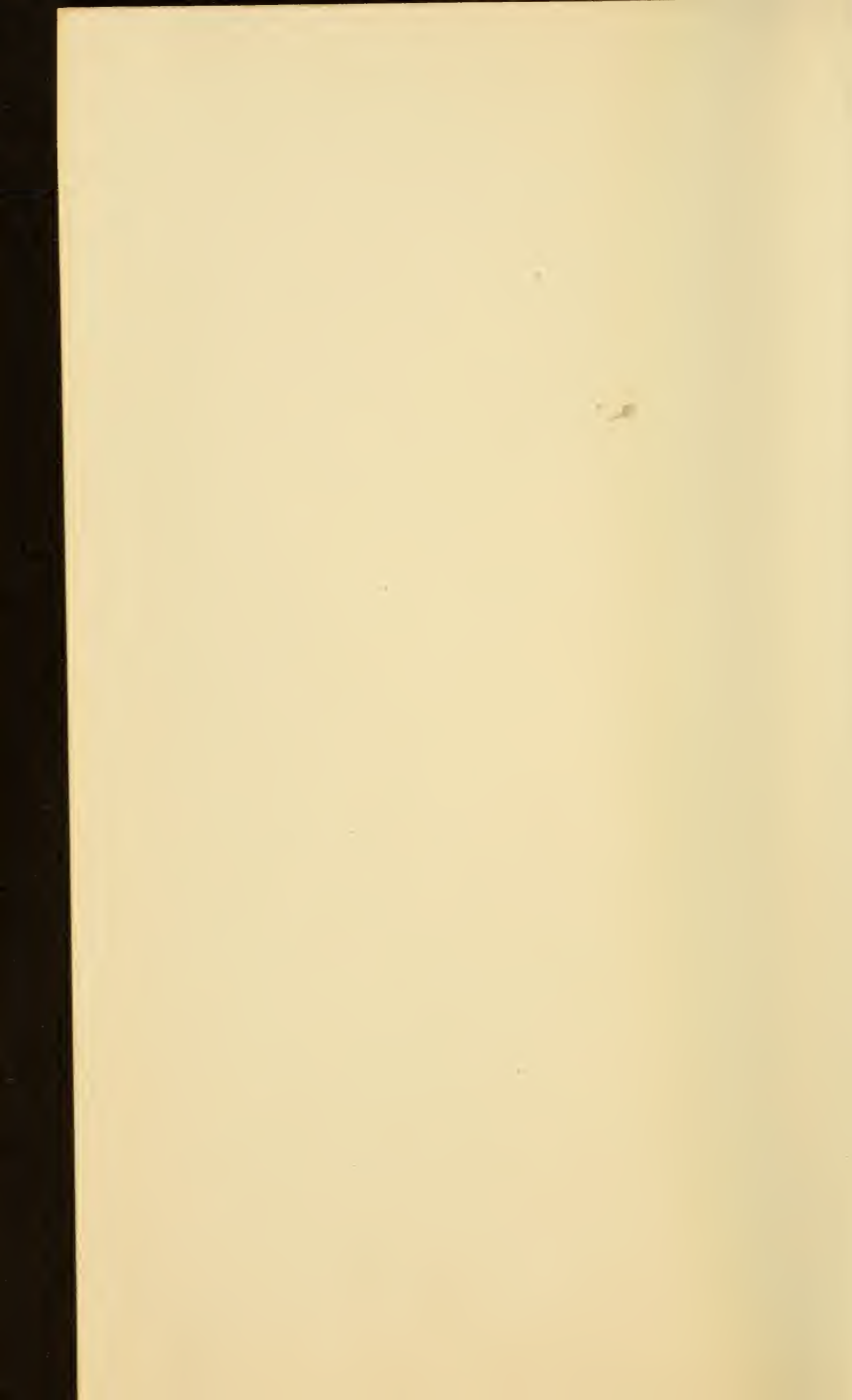












BOSTON LECTURES.

1870.

CHRISTIANITY AND SCEPTICISM.

Deposited May 12. 1870

Recorded Vol. 45. Page 649.



No. 497.



BOSTON:

Congregational Sabbath-School and Publishing Society.

DEPOSITORY, No. 13, CORNHILL.

BT 1095
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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THE idea of a course of Lectures upon matters at issue between Christianity and the scepticism of our day appears to have sprung up in several minds at once. Preliminary steps were taken in a Committee of the General Association of the Congregational Churches of this State. The plan was matured by a second Committee, nominated by the Congregational pastors of Boston; and has been carried into effect through the generosity of members of their churches.

Every thoughtful person must feel the importance of a thorough and scholarly treatment of philosophical and religious questions. It has been the hope of those interested in providing these Lectures, that they might be able to present to the public a series of papers on important themes that would command an

attentive consideration from persons of all schools of belief or speculation. The matters at issue are too serious for partisanship, having a direct bearing upon vital interests of the race and all its individuals. If this course of Lectures shall help to a knowledge of the truth, to a nobler mood of investigation, or a more earnest habit of inquiry, its projectors will be content.

A similar course for next year is in contemplation.

Boston, April, 1870.

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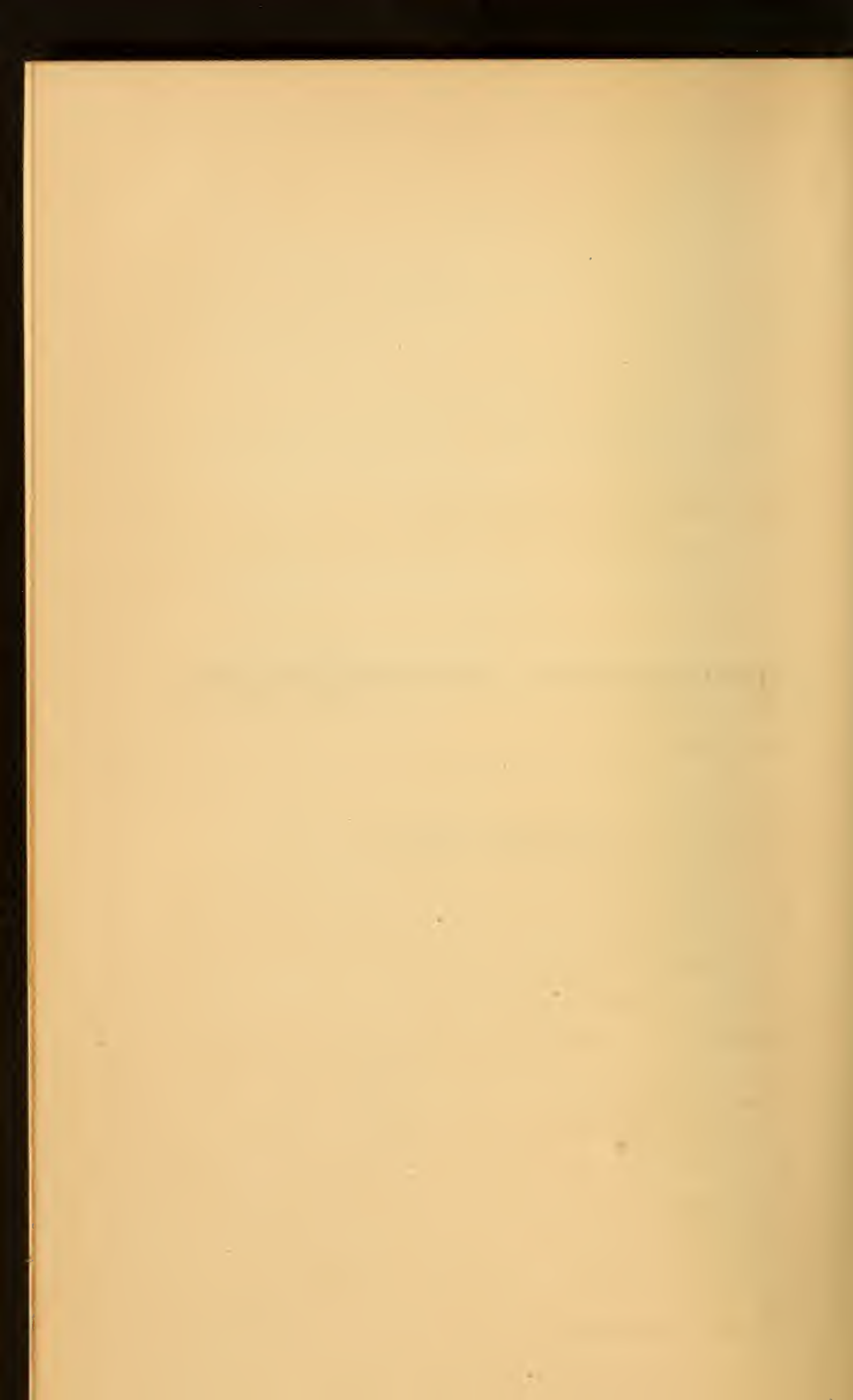
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CHRISTIANITY AND SCEPTICISM.



LECTURES.



I.

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF HUMAN PROGRESS CONTRASTED WITH THE NATURALISTIC.

BY REV. SAMUEL HARRIS, D.D., PRESIDENT OF BOWDOIN COLLEGE.

THE expectation of a better future for mankind is a marked characteristic of our time, and a determining force in the development of our civilization.

This expectation is remarkable for its undoubting assurance. In all thinking and planning in reference to the interests of society, the coming of the better future is assumed as established, and needing no argument. Property, labor, and life are expended to realize it. In times of re-action and discouragement, we say, "Revolutions never go backwards," as if this were a self-evident axiom. So persistent and controlling is the expectation, that the unthinking welcome every convulsion of society as certain to advance human progress.

The character of the progress thus expected is remarkable: it is progress by the realization of moral and spiritual ideas. This is commonly called a materialistic age: its energies are said to be absorbed in industrial enterprise. And yet it is moral and spiritual rather than industrial questions which occupy the thinking, and determine the action, of the age, — the

conversion of the world (the revived power of which in the churches, stimulating missions to the heathen, and efforts more completely to Christianize Christendom, is one of the striking characteristics of this century); liberty of conscience; the rights of man; the universal reign of justice; "government of the people by the people and for the people;" the termination of tyranny, slavery, serfdom, and caste; the diffusion of education, and the suppression of vice; the brotherhood of man; the condemnation of wars of conquest, and the hope of universal peace. The discussion of these ideas, and the struggle to realize them, has largely constituted the history of Christendom for centuries, and of no generation more than of this. Even the triumphs of industry—the Atlantic Cable, the Pacific Railroad, the Suez Canal—are celebrated as binding the nations together, and promoting brotherhood and peace, as much as for their material advantages.

The expectation of progress is also remarkable for its universality. It asserts itself not only in religion and poetry, but also in natural science, in philosophy, politics, and sociology. The thinking of the age, from whatever point it starts, takes on a philanthropic character, and promises a better future to man.

There are, however, different theories as to the origin and nature of the progress of society. These may be grouped in two classes: one may be called, for the want of a better name, the Naturalistic; the other, the Christian theory.

The Naturalistic theory is in substance this: Man is an organized force of Nature, impelled by primitive instincts, and under the action of climate, soil,

and other cosmic influences necessarily developed precisely in the line of his actual history. The race is improved by propagation in accordance with the law of natural selection. In the struggle for existence, the strong crowd out the weak, and transmit their own superiority to their offspring. Exercising his ingenuity to supply his wants, man discovers and invents: his intellect is sharpened, and becomes a factor in his progress. But moral ideas, being in all nations and ages the same, are not factors in human progress. The progress of man is thus analogous to the growth of a seed; the necessary development of his vital force under the action of the external forces of Nature. Sin, therefore, loses its significance and its blameworthiness, and becomes only a necessary step in the process of development; like having the measles,—not agreeable for the time, but the only way of eliminating from the constitution its liability to the disease. The darkest and most corrupt ages, the greatest crimes, the most wicked men, become necessary parts of the progress of man. The better future, legitimately and logically, can be realized only in the multiplication of comforts, in the more complete possession of natural resources, in a civilization in which man liveth by bread alone. I will not say, however, that all who adopt a Naturalistic theory accept this legitimate and logical result.

Christianity presupposes that man is not merely a creature of instinct, but also endowed with reason and free will, and capable of emotions, aspirations, and affections quickened by the truths of reason, and

drawing the soul upward to God. It teaches, that, if a man abandons himself to the impulses of the blind instincts of his nature as acted on by the forces of external nature, he fails to realize the highest possibilities of his being, and degenerates into a life properly called carnal. Plato illustrates this by comparing the soul to a chariot drawn by two horses: one horse represents the natural instincts, — frolicsome, capricious, but broken to the harness, and obedient to the driver; the other horse represents the rational emotions, aspirations, and affections, steady, but powerful and swift. Reason is the charioteer; and the soul is drawn swiftly along the ascending and brightening way, which leads to God.*

Man, as a rational being, is subject to the supreme, eternal, unchangeable law of reason, which is the law alike over nature and over spirit. In the exercise of free will, he may spend his life acting in antagonism to the law of reason; that is, in efforts to realize an absurdity. For example: In antagonism to the law that governs Nature, a man may waste his life in efforts to realize perpetual motion: so, in antagonism to the law of love that governs the free action of rational beings, he may spend his life in trying to realize the absurdity that his highest welfare is found in selfishness; and thus, in the higher and spiritual sphere, he wastes and throws away his life, or, in the language of Jesus, “loses himself, or is cast away.”

Man has thus become a sinner, and, as such, is lost.

Christianity, presupposing all this, here presents itself; being essentially the love of God redeeming man from the guilt and power of sin, God in Christ recon-

* Phædrus, §§ 54, 74.

ciling the world unto himself, and by the Holy Spirit seeking the lost to draw them to himself in a new and spiritual life. Through the riven body of the Son of man, Christianity unveils the throne of God,—the clouds and darkness parting, the rainbow of promise over it, the throne of majesty coming forth to view as a seat of mercy and a throne of grace, and the divine love beaming with promise on the world. Christianity, then, does not regard man simply as a force of Nature, acted on by instincts of Nature within and cosmic agencies of Nature without; nor merely as endowed with reason and free will, and left to work out his destiny by his own energies: but it teaches that a power from God comes down upon humanity; that God's redeeming grace through Christ and by the Holy Spirit enters into human history as a power of quickening and renovation; and that human progress is realized only as man, having faith in God as man's Redeemer, and in his grace as a power of renovation working in human history, becomes a worker together with God in saving mankind from sin.

Therefore, as man in his natural life is acted on by the cosmic forces of Nature that encompass him, so in his spiritual life he is acted on by spiritual energies that come down on him from God. Science teaches that the sun is the source and sustainer of all natural forces acting on earth. His light, so intense that the calcium-light, or whatever is the brightest artificial light, appears as a dark spot or shadow when held between the eye and the sun,—his light is poured out with boundless prodigality, lying with all its intensity on the ocean and the land, around every tree, and every blade of grass, and every animated creature, around

every lifeless stone and worthless weed. So God's love, set forth in Christ as a mystery of love surpassing human measurement, is poured out in redemption with boundless prodigality, and, like sunshine, compasses all human souls, quickens all the forces which act in the renovation of society, and is the source and sustainer of all spiritual life.

The result of Christian progress is to be the transformation of human society into a kingdom of God, in which men will realize the highest possibilities of their being, and the reign of justice and love will be extended over all the earth.

The doctrine which I propose to set forth is this: The power in modern Christian civilization, of the expectation of human progress to be realized in a universal reign of righteousness and love, originated in Christianity; and the expected progress can be realized only by the realization of Christian ideas.

These two propositions I will consider separately:—

I. The power in modern Christian civilization, of the expectation of human progress to be realized in a universal reign of righteousness and love, originated in Christianity.

Let it be distinctly understood at the outset, that I do not claim that Christianity is the source of all human progress. Man is endowed with intellectual, voluntary, and physical powers and moral capacities; and it is a radical impulse of his nature to put forth all his powers in action. Therefore progress is always possible in the advancement of knowledge and of intellectual power, in the acquisition of mastery over the powers of Nature by mechanical inventions, in subduing the earth and taking possession of its

resources, in the development of civilization, and even of religion. It is not claimed that all progress of this kind is the result of Christianity; but that Christianity introduces into humanity a spiritual and redemptive energy, determining human activity to the realization of moral ideas and spiritual renovation; that it makes the realization of these moral ideas and this spiritual renovation an end to which men intelligently and enthusiastically consecrate their energies; that thus it makes the expectation of progress towards the universal reign of righteousness and love a power in the advancement of civilization, and in determining its character; and that thus it stimulates to new energy, while guiding to new and nobler ends, the intellectual and industrial activity of man. Says Lecky, "The great characteristic of Christianity, and the great moral proof of its divinity, is, that it has been the main source of the moral development of Europe; and that it has discharged this office, not so much by the inculcation of a system of ethics, however pure, as by the assimilating and attractive influence of a perfect ideal. The moral progress of mankind can never cease to be distinctively and intensely Christian so long as it consists of a gradual approximation to the character of the Christian Founder. There is, indeed, nothing more wonderful in the history of the human race than the way in which that ideal has traversed the lapse of ages, acquiring new strength and beauty with each advance of civilization, and infusing its beneficent influence into every sphere of thought and action." *

In the history of the past, civilizations and religions

* History of Rationalism, vol. i. p. 312.

have flourished in various countries, and perished: they have come forth as a flower, and faded away, because the idea which animated them, and the end to which they directed human action, were at best but a partial truth and a partial good. Christianity is vitalizing a new civilization; God's love to man quickening men to trust God, and to love and serve each other. A civilization thus vitalized by the grandest thoughts which the human intellect has ever mastered, and consecrated to the realization of the grandest conception which the human imagination has ever conceived, we may reasonably expect, will be as wide and as lasting as the earth itself.

A full investigation of the Christian origin of the power of the modern expectation of progress will not be expected; for it would involve an investigation of the history of Christian civilization: and the causes affecting human progress are so complex, it is not easy precisely to define the influence of each. I content myself with making two points, sufficient of themselves to establish my proposition:—

1. In all history, this expectation of human progress towards a universal reign of righteousness has never appeared as a power either in literature or in civilization outside of the influence of the Christian Scriptures.

In support of this general proposition, I direct your attention to the following indisputable facts:—

(1.) The Christian Scriptures are aglow with the promise and prophecy of a better future for man, to be realized through God's redeeming grace in Jesus Christ establishing a reign of justice and love over all the earth. Even the Old Testament prophecies

it. Before the Sun is risen, the light of his coming is thrown on the most distant summits of time.

In the opening of Genesis, we find the doctrine of one personal God, the Creator of the world ; in the first line of that ancient book, a clear solution of that mighty problem which elsewhere occupied and baffled the profoundest thinking of man for centuries, and which neither the philosophy of the polytheistic West, exalting men to be gods, nor the philosophy of the pantheistic East, identifying God with his works, was ever able to solve. Then, turning the page, we have the great facts of God's moral government and of man's sin, and immediately God's promise of deliverance. These grand thoughts, which lie at the foundation of the philosophy of human history, are here at the very opening of this ancient book.

And as to this first promise, call it allegory, myth, what you will, this at least is indisputable, — that this promise vitalizes the literature of the Hebrews, and is the keynote of those writings, produced by many authors through a series of many centuries, which constitute the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament ; that this promise has been a vital force in the growth of the Christian Church, and is to-day the acknowledged Protevangelium to all Christian people.

This first promise, penetrating the Hebrew literature, re-appears in the promise to Abraham : " In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ; " a promise of blessedness to man in those days of violence and hate, when as yet the highest glory of a nation was to conquer and spoil other nations ; a promise of blessedness to all nations in those days of division and exclusiveness, when each nation regarded

other nations as natural enemies ; a promise of blessedness to all nations through the knowledge and service of one God, through one and the same universal religion ; a doctrine so foreign to ancient thought, that, even after Christ had died, Celsus urged it as an argument against Christianity, that it claimed to be a universal religion, and urged that it was absurd to teach that there is but one God and one religion for all mankind. This promise re-appears as the promise of a Messiah, a King anointed of God, who should establish a kingdom of righteousness : it is reiterated by the prophets with ever-increasing distinctness ; the reign of justice and of love displacing the reign of force, righting all wrongs, terminating tyranny and oppression : "He shall judge the poor of the people ; he shall save the children of the needy ; he shall break in pieces the oppressor. In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." This ever-brightening promise saturated the thinking of the Jewish people, was carried with them in their dispersion, and, down to modern times, has been regarded by them as the central doctrine and vital power of their Scriptures.

When Jesus appeared, he declared himself the Christ of prophecy, come to set up the kingdom so long foretold. His preaching was, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." He came to redeem the world from sin. Jesus, in his person and life, is the embodiment of God's love to man, redeeming him from sin ; and of man's love to his fellow, working with God to the same end. As the ideal man, his person and life show us the moral and spiritual perfection

of man realized through trust in God, in love to man, —love manifested in toil, suffering, and death, to save men from misery and sin.

Christianity, as Jesus presents it, is essentially the redemption of man. The promise of human renovation through redemption enters into the essence of Christianity.

Observe, here, that the Christian Scriptures present this idea of the kingdom of righteousness, not as a philosophical speculation or a poetical picture, but as a practical end, the grand end of human history and action, to the realization of which every man is bound to consecrate his life, and which is to be the quickening and guiding motive of all action: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

Observe, also, that the ideas to be realized in establishing this kingdom are the very ideas dominant in the modern expectation of human progress and in the actual development of modern civilization in Christendom. The truth of this remark will be further exemplified in the second part of my discourse.

Thus the promise of the progress of mankind by the power of truth and love, the transformation of human society into a kingdom of God, is the central and vitalizing thought of the Old and New Testaments, and enters into the essence of Christianity.

Say, if you will, that some Christian ministers have apologized for slavery, and supported tyranny; adopt, if you will, the rude words of Froude, that, while society is decaying with dishonesty and rapacity, Christian ministers have concerned themselves only about "the color of the ecclesiastical petticoats," or,

as it is oftener said among us, with metaphysical dogmas: yet no one can deny that the Bible sets forth Christianity as the power of renovating society, and of establishing over all the earth the reign of justice, peace, and love. Jesus says, "I bear witness of myself, and my witness is true." To him, the infallible witness, I appeal. Put your souls into communion with him, and you will see that Christianity is in its essence the religion of progress; that it claims to be the vital force in the renovation of society.

Here, then, is the first indisputable fact, — that the idea of human progress, the promise of a reign of righteousness attained through God's redeeming grace, pervades the Scriptures, and is of the essence of Christianity.

(2.) The second fact to be noticed is, that this idea and expectation are not characteristic of heathen literature. In that literature may be found great truths and noble sentiments, profound philosophy and elevated morality; but it is not the literature of promise and hope. Its golden age was in the past, not in the future. It does not set forth the renovation of man as the proper end of all action, alike of God and man, in human history. Ackerman has attempted to prove that Plato had caught this great Christian idea; but his argument only shows how far-fetched the evidence must be, and leaves us more convinced that the Christian idea is not there. As we read the literature of the heathen, and the reports of it from those who have explored literatures which we have not studied, we are not impressed by those great thoughts which are the elements of the Christian expectation of human progress, and which are familiar in every depart-

ment of modern thought: we are impressed by their absence. We do not find dominant in Pagan literature the recognition of mankind as a unity or solidarity, in which all have common interests and rights, and to which all owe common duties; nor of human brotherhood, with its universal reciprocity of fraternal obligations and service; nor of the prospective progress of mankind in intelligence, character, and happiness; nor of the reform of abuses, and the putting-away of oppression and wrong; nor of the obligation of every man, a debtor to the Greek and the Jew, to the wise and the unwise, to consecrate himself in the spirit of self-denial to the service of mankind, toiling to hasten the coming of the better future. The largest object or sphere of service to the heathen was his family, his tribe, or, at the most, his city or state. Max Müller says the word "mankind" never passed the lips of Socrates or Plato or Aristotle. "Where the Greek saw barbarians, we see brethren; . . . where the Greek saw nations (*εθνη*), we see mankind, toiling and suffering, severed by oceans, divided by language, and severed by national enmity, yet evermore tending, under a divine control, towards the fulfilment of that inscrutable purpose for which the world was created, and man placed in it bearing the image of God."* In short, heathen literature lacks that class of ideas, now so familiar and powerful, which we have come to designate as humanitarian or philanthropic. A story like "Oliver Twist" or "Uncle Tom's Cabin," or any story whose interest consists in awakening sympathy for the wrongs of an inferior

* Chips, vol. ii. p. 5.

caste, would surprise us as strangely out of place in any heathen literature.

Further : heathen literature lacks the idea of God's love to man entering into human history as an energy of redeeming grace, quickening men in faith and love to become workers together with God in removing human misery and sin in the renovation of society and the extension of the kingdom of God.

Here, then, history presents to us this wonderful contrast, — the Christian Scriptures, a series of little books written by a succession of authors through sixteen hundred years, glowing with the promise of a better future to man, and the great ideas inherent in that great conception ; and Heathen literature, destitute of this grand conception, and of the ideas which enter into it.

(3.) But this contrast extends farther : it pertains not merely to literature, but is equally remarkable in the civilization which is developed. The expectation of human progress to a universal reign of righteousness has never appeared as a power in the advancement of civilization outside of the influence of the Christian Scriptures.

What we call the growth of Pagan nations has been mainly enlargement by the power of the sword. The development of Pagan civilization out of pre-existent barbarism, history gives us slight opportunity to trace. The great civilized nations of heathenism appear to have been in possession of civilization at their beginning, and to have succeeded to a previous civilization. So far, however, as they have made progress in philosophy, in literature, in political institutions, in the useful arts and the fine arts, it is certain that the

progress has not been quickened and guided by our modern and Christian ideas of progress. These have never been a power in the development of such civilization, and have never been realized in it even in its highest forms. Accordingly, we find heathen civilization, after a time, falling into degeneracy, or becoming stationary. At present, progress of every kind seems to be at an end outside of the Christian nations, and the influences which these nations are exerting upon heathen civilization. Says Prof. Maine, "The stationary condition of the human race is the rule: the progressive is the exception." "It is most difficult for a citizen of Western Europe to bring home thoroughly to himself the truth that the civilization which surrounds him is a rare exception in the history of the world."* Christian nations alone are now the progressive nations; the Christian expectation of progress, and the great ideas involved in it, are controlling forces in the progressive civilization of those nations: outside of Christianity, all civilization is unprogressive, unexpectant, stagnant.

(4.) In the religions of the world are truths and sentiments which must be recognized in all religion; but these religions have not been religions of promise, and have not been able to quicken and guide human progress to the realization of moral and spiritual ideals and ends.

Here we meet a type of thought becoming common in some circles, the superficialness of which it requires but a slight acquaintance with history to expose. Teachers of religion are saying that Christianity is

* Ancient Law, pp. 23, 24.

losing its distinctive characteristics, and becoming simple humanitarianism or philanthropy; that it is resolving itself into that universal ethnic religion in which thoughtful minds of all ages and nations have agreed. We know that ethnology is enlarging our knowledge of the religions of the world, and that certain great religious ideas everywhere appear; but this is only giving us a larger knowledge of and a new name for that natural religion which Christianity presupposes, and which Christian teachers have always recognized. But here we meet the historical fact, that this universal religion, appearing under various forms in the ethnic religions, has never given to man any promise or prophecy of progress, nor any of the grand ideas which are included in that prophecy; nor ever quickened a progressive civilization; nor ever developed humanitarianism or philanthropy; but, on the contrary, stiffening into codes, rituals, or philosophies, has made no future possible but the petrified past. In the face of these historical facts, it is pertinent to ask these teachers why they repudiate that which is distinctive of Christianity, — the redemption of man from sin by God's grace in Christ, which involves in its very essence the idea of human progress and the renovation of society, and God's kingdom of righteousness filling the earth, — and from which, historically, the progressive civilization of Christendom has issued, and offer us as a substitute the abstract generalities of ethnic religions, which never developed the idea of progress or of philanthropy, and have always proved themselves impotent to quicken a progressive civilization.

We have, then, this indisputable fact of history, —

that the ideas of progress which now quicken the philanthropy of Christendom are the ideas of the Christian Scriptures and of Christianity; and that the progressive civilization which these ideas quicken is found only in the line of Christian influence, and is proportioned to the degree in which Christian ideas have penetrated society. The advocates of the Naturalistic theories, finding the expectation of human progress current in our literature and civilization, seem to suppose that all that is necessary for them is to devise an hypothesis presenting a possible explanation of the progress which man has attained, and their case is gained; but, before they have a right to claim consideration for their hypothesis, they are bound to face and account for these historical facts.

2. But if we pass by these facts, and examine the theory of Naturalism, we find it, as a theory or hypothesis, inadequate to account for the progressive civilization of our day; for the progress which we are realizing and expecting is a progress by the triumph of ideas and sentiments, by truth and right, by universal justice, by love to God and man. But Naturalism in every form must start with the simple idea of natural force,—the strong crushing out the weak, or the strong ruling and using the weak. And it is impossible by any chemistry of thought to derive truth, right, justice, and love from sheer blind force; to develop religion, which implies the supremacy of love, out of Naturalism, which implies the supremacy of force. To say nothing of the realization of Christianity in society, Naturalism cannot account for it simply as a thought or conception actually existing in human literature.

I may best confirm my position here by calling your attention to the theory of Naturalism in the forms in which it has been presented by three of its most eminent advocates.

I cite, first, Comte, the founder of the positive philosophy. He taught the natural and necessary development of man, beginning with fetichism, through polytheism and monotheism to metaphysics, and thence to the positive philosophy.

Comte, in his "Positive Philosophy," elaborately treated sociology, and, in later works, fully presented his idea of human society and its institutions in the future. He explicitly denies the doctrines of freedom of conscience, the rights of man, and popular government; he asserts the principle of ancient and heathen civilization,—that the individual has no rights (rights belong only to the State; to the individual belong only duties); and he pictures society under the despotism of a priesthood of *savans*, extending their scientific inquisition and despotism over the minutest details of private life. The future of society, as he depicts it, is unprogressive and stagnant,—analogous to that of China; the analogy extending even to the worship of ancestors. Here, then, is the testimony of the founder of the positive philosophy, that it is impossible to obtain from Naturalism those ideas of human progress which vitalize our Protestant civilization, but only those which have produced the unprogressive civilization and despotic institutions of heathenism.

I next cite Mr. Buckle. He simply refuses to consider the question, how Naturalism is to account for the moral and spiritual ideas which have been so efficient forces in human progress thus far, and which

underlie our modern expectations of a better future. He simply dismisses the problem with the audacious assertion, that moral and spiritual ideas, having been in all ages the same, have not been factors in human progress, and are not to be taken into the account in the study of the development of civilization.*

Apply his principle to a specific case. There are cannibal tribes who spend their lives in ravening for food, slaying and devouring beasts and men. A traveller relates of one of these families, that, having been molested by the incursions of a beast of prey, they set a trap for the beast, and baited the trap with a living baby. Does Mr. Buckle mean that the moral ideas of these cannibals are the same with ours? or does he mean that our moral ideas are the same with those of the cannibals? And does he mean, that in the education and development of the cannibals to the intelligence, purity, and refinement of a Christian family, the development of their moral and spiritual nature would be of no account, and moral and spiritual ideas would perform no part?

Mr. Buckle's position can only be explained as an audacious refusal to look at a question to which his Naturalistic theory affords no answer. It contradicts all history which presents moral and spiritual ideas as pre-eminently effective in determining the courses of human action and development. It especially contradicts the history of Western Europe and America for the last three hundred years, which has consisted largely of the determination and realization of moral and spiritual principles.

* History of Civilization, vol. i. pp. 129, 130.

I cite next Herbert Spencer. He accepts the problem, and attempts to solve it. Starting, as all Naturalistic theories must, with the simple idea of force necessarily developed under the action on it of the cosmic forces, he begins with human society constituted under the rule of the strongest man, and attempts to explain, as the simple and necessary development of this rule of force over abject and subjugated men, all the beauty and sublimity of modern Christian civilization. The power of the strong man terrifying his subjects to obedience originates the idea of government. His declared will, remaining unchanged for a time, generates the idea of law. After the strong man's death, the fear of him, under which they had trembled while he lived, continues: they fear him as a mysterious being even more terrible than when he lived; and out of this superstitious terror is developed religion. The strong man's will, obeyed through dread of him while he lived, and obeyed through the greater dread of him after he is dead, gradually comes to be regarded as an unchangeable law of right, out of which comes the idea of immutable morality. Manners, etiquette, and ceremony are only the remains of the abject prostrations with which the trembling subjects came into the presence of the strong one, seeking to propitiate his favor. Fashion itself is only the remains of the disposition of the subjects to imitate the strong man and his family.

No one can deny the ingenuity of this speculation. But when, divesting ourselves of the interest awakened by the author's ingenious development of human history, we consider his theory rationally, it

can be regarded but as a reduction of Naturalism to absurdity; for it is not less than absurd to affirm that all the moral and spiritual beauty and grandeur of history have been necessarily developed out of sheer force in a strong man crushing the weaker, and holding them in subjection by abject terror. From these alone nothing good can be developed. The development of any thing better necessarily presupposes the presence of other principles.

And I may add, that the theory of Mr. Spencer is inconsistent with what is extensively accepted as historical fact, — that social organization began with the family, and the primitive government was the patriarchal. The authority of the primitive ruler, therefore, did not rest on sheer force, but on the reverence due from children to their father. Thus history shows that the initial point in the development of society was not, as Naturalism would teach, the subjugation of the weak by the strong, and obedience compelled by superior strength; but it was, at least, the right of the father to command his children, and the reverence due to superior age and wisdom.

To this I may add, that the researches of ethnology are continually adding new evidence in disproof of the theory, that the human race has been developed from inferior animals, and has slowly risen through barbarism to civilization; and in support of the theory, that man's primitive condition was one of comparative civilization. If a brilliant civilization and a great empire existed in Arabia for centuries before Solomon, of which, in its decline, the Queen of Sheba was one of the last representatives; if the Sanscrit is but one branch of the common Aryan

tongue, spoken by that race before even the Indian branch of it broke off from the main stock, and settled in India ; and if they who spoke that common Aryan tongue in ages before the Sanscrit existed were a civilized people ; if the earliest races of men believed in one God, and polytheism was a later corruption ; if these and similar intimations of ethnology are true, — then, however immensely ethnology may claim to enlarge the current chronology of the Old Testament, we have ethnological facts disproving the development of man from the lower animals, and the development of civilization from barbarism ; confirming the scriptural doctrine, that man began his career on earth in intelligence and a degree of civilization ; confirming Paul's philosophy in the first chapter of the Romans, that polytheism originated through human sinfulness as a corruption of monotheism ; and setting forth the doctrine, that barbarism is the result of degeneracy from civilization through the perverseness and sinfulness of man, and not that civilization is a development from barbarism through purely natural forces. This, again, accords with the scriptural teaching, that man has fallen by sin from a higher to a lower condition, and is re-instated by moral and spiritual energies approaching him from without himself ; and that man does not arise from the lower to the higher, by the mere force of Nature, without moral and spiritual influences. History presents no instance of a barbarous tribe rising into civilization by its native energies, and without being quickened by influences from without itself. If the Naturalistic theory is true, it is pertinent to ask why, in all human history, no instance was ever found of

the spontaneous growth of a barbarous tribe into civilization.

It is plain, then, that the Naturalistic theories are inadequate either to account for human progress as actually realized, or to take up and explain the actual facts of human progress and human unprogressiveness in the history of the past.

But, as I have already shown, the great ideas which are the vital forces of human progress are in the Christian Scriptures. Here is a system of redemption involving progress in its essential conception, and adequate to explain all the facts.

And here let me remark, in passing, that Naturalism is inadequate to account for the Bible itself; for, according to Naturalism, a literature must be the necessary outgrowth of the life of the people, and great men, religions, and institutions must be the necessary result of the growth and spirit of the age. As I have already shown, the literature of the Hebrews glows with the promise of blessedness to all men through the predicted reign of the Messiah in righteousness and love; and this promise is enunciated in that literature with increasing distinctness and emphasis as the centuries advance. And yet the Jewish people themselves were exclusive, bigoted, and intolerant; and, as their literature became more luminous with the all-embracing promise, the life of the people became more hard and contracted and self-righteous. A literature thus contrary to and above the life of the people cannot be explained as the necessary outgrowth of that life: it is best explained as the revelation of God.

In like manner, Naturalism must account for Jesus

as the necessary outgrowth of his age. It must affirm of him, as of all great men, that his individual force is of slight account ; all that was in him was but the outgrowth of his age ; if he had not lived, the spirit of the age would necessarily have found utterance through some other. But Jesus cannot be accounted for as the natural outgrowth and product of his age. His age was, of all the ages, the most barren of spiritual life : polytheism had decayed into Epicurean scepticism ; Judaism had degenerated into the formalism of the Pharisee and the unbelief of the Sadducee. Jesus was in all particulars unlike his age, and contrary to it : not only so ; but he introduced into it a new life, and commenced its transformation into his own likeness. The world lay like a burned field, — nothing visible but the blackened cinders of scepticism and the scorched and hollow stalks of empty profession. Jesus came ; and life, verdure, and fruit appeared. There went forth, from the very publicans, Matthews ; and from the very Pharisees, Pauls : from that ungodly age there went forth godly men and women, confessors and martyrs, — a living Church of God, a power of faith and love, which have been the admiration of all succeeding ages. Demonstrably, here was not a life spontaneously developed out of humanity, but a life coming down upon humanity from above, — an energy of God's redeeming grace entering as a new and renovating power into the history of man.

And here we notice this peculiarity of the Bible, — while it is an authoritative record completed ages ago, to which all Christians defer as their law of life and faith, yet it is not a record which binds the

future under the past, and restrains the progress of thought and civilization; but it is a book full of the seeds of truth, out of which life and civilization are perpetually developed, and where principles and ideals are forever in advance of all the progress of man. In this it is unlike all other records. Maine remarks, that "the greatest part of mankind has never shown a particle of desire that its civil institutions should be improved since the moment when external completeness was first given them by their embodiment in some permanent record." "Instead of the civilization expanding the law, the law has limited the civilization." "In progressive nations, social necessities and social opinion are always more or less in advance of the law."* The Bible is a record completed nearly eighteen hundred years ago; yet it has never limited human progress. Social necessities and opinions are never in advance of it; but, unlike all other codes and records, it is evermore the stimulus, the law, and the ideal of a higher life for the individual, and of a purer and better civilization for society.

II. The expected renovation of society can be realized only by the realization of Christian ideas.

This I can best set forth by considering the Christian doctrine of progress in contrast with the Naturalistic in their applications to political, social, and individual life.

1. Political Institutions.

Human progress is commonly illustrated by analogy

* *Ancient Law*, pp. 21-23.

with the development of organic life: its law is, progress from the homogeneous to the complex, thence to the unity of the complex in the living organization. The yolk of an egg is homogeneous. Examine it in different stages of incubation. You observe, first, lines of red globules radiating through it; then the various organs sketched and forming, the homogeneous yolk diversified into complexity; lastly, all these diverse organs are brought into unity in the living organization of the bird. Analogous to this is the progress of society, — always the homogeneous diversified into complexity, and that complexity brought back into a higher and more complete unity.

In examining human society, we cannot begin with the absolutely homogeneous; for history nowhere presents to us that absolute homogeneousness. Society, wherever found, has at least become so far diversified into complexity, that we find the ruler and the ruled.

I begin, then, with society, in the nearest approach to homogeneousness in which it ever appears, existing under patriarchal government.

What, now, I ask, is the bond of unity or fellowship? What determines with whom men are to fraternize? — to whom they acknowledge themselves as owing friendship and service? It is the old question, “Who is my neighbor?” Naturalism is obliged to answer, “The bond of human society is the tie of birth. My neighbor is one of my own family, bound to me by blood. The range of fraternity and obligation is limited to kinship. The unit of society is the family, which may grow into the clan, embracing many families, and the clan into a tribe, embracing many clans, and the tribe into a nation, embracing

many tribes, but always united, at least in theory, as one race, — the outgrowth of one family.”

This necessary principle of Naturalism was the principle underlying the civilization of the ancients, and still underlying all civilization which Christianity has not vitalized. Says Maine, “Of this we may at least be certain, that all ancient societies regarded themselves as having proceeded from one original stock, and even labored under an incapacity for comprehending any reason, except this, for holding together in political union. The history of political ideas begins, in fact, with the assumption that kinship in blood is the sole possible ground of community in political functions; nor is there any of those subversions of feeling which we emphatically term revolutions, so startling and so complete as the change which is accomplished when some other principle . . . establishes itself for the first time as the basis of common political action.”* The political ideas and institutions resulting have been so fundamentally different from our own, that it is difficult for us to form a conception of them. It is necessary, therefore, to dwell with some particularity on this point.

In the first place, observe that unity of race involves separation from other races, and antagonism to them. The principle on which society is thus organized is a principle of antagonism and hate. This malign characteristic is expressed in the word “clannishness.” Unity of race, however wide, is only a magnified clannishness.

Accordingly, race-hatred has been one of the most

* Ancient Law, p. 124.

powerful and malignant forces in history. Even now, weakened as it has been by the commingling of races and the power of Christian ideas, we see its tremendous malignity and strength in the hatred of Western Europeans against the Turks, of the Magyar against the Teuton, the Celt in Ireland against the English, and of all white races in America against the Negro, the Indian, and the Chinese.

So far, then, as, under the operation of this principle, society becomes more complex, it is only by being broken up into families and tribes irreparably separated from each other by the tie of birth which gives unity to each tribe, but brings it into a state of natural and necessary enmity against other tribes. The very principle of unity becomes a principle of separation and antagonism.

Observe, now, the only methods by which society, thus diversified into families and clans, can become united in large organizations. It would be first by the natural growth of a family into a clan, a tribe, a nation. This process, however, could never advance far without bringing one clan or tribe in conflict with another. The stronger conquers the weaker, appropriates its territory, and reduces the people to personal slavery or political vassalage. Thus the history of the world becomes the history of wars of conquest, justified by all the thinking that grows out of the principle of the organization of society by race-unity. Caste enters into the very constitution of the State,—a conquering race born to rule; a subjugated race born to serve, born subjects, i.e. subjugated. Authority rests on force: might makes right. The governed are an inferior caste, existing

for the benefit of the superior caste that govern. Thus society is constituted in the conflict of strength, and the rule of the strong that conquer over the weak, who are subdued. "He who cannot be hammer must be anvil." Despotic oppression is the essence of the political constitution.

The highest and best conception of a State attained in the ancient civilization was of a city, the domicile of a dominant race, ruling the subjugated people of a different race in the surrounding territory. This was the idea of the republic of Rome, improperly so called. The dominant race of Romans, domiciled in the city of Rome, chose their own rulers, and made their own laws; but through all the vast territories of the republic beyond were only subjugated races, ruled by the despotic power of the dominant race in Rome. This idea of a family or race determines the constitution of the government, arranging the people in families, houses or clans, and tribes; and when, in the time of the empire, the right of citizenship in Rome could be purchased with a great sum, it was only the adoption of the new citizen into the dominant and privileged race. The same was the idea of government in the cities of Greece and of Ionia, in Carthage, Tyre, and Sidon. In all the boasted republics, falsely so called, of ancient times, the republics consisted of a dominant race ruling by despotic force subjugated races.

Another point here demands attention, — that, in the ancient political constitution of society resting on birth and force, the unit of society was the family; whereas, in Christian civilization, the unit of society is the individual. "Society in primitive times was

not, what it is assumed to be at present, a collection of individuals. In fact, and in view of the men who composed it, it was an aggregation of families." The family was held collectively responsible; and all its members were punished for the offence of one. This peculiarity makes it difficult for us to comprehend the ancient civilization. The heathen world, in all its thinking, ancient and modern, never reached the thought that the individual man has political rights by virtue of his personality as a man. All his rights he holds as privileges belonging to him, not as a man, but by virtue of his membership in a dominant family, or granted to him by the gracious gift of some dominant family. And this is as true of the self-governing dominant race in Greece and Rome as of any other heathen society. The individual was lost in the family or race. Hence the tone of all Greek and Roman thought, that the individual is a creature and tool of the State, to be used as the State will; that the people exist for the State, not the State for the people; that, as relating to the State, the individual has no rights; that all rights belong to the State,—to the individual, only duties.

I proceed to consider, in contrast, the Christian doctrine in its relation to political progress.

Notice in the outset, that Christianity does not primarily concern itself with institutions. Its primary aim is to purify the thought and renovate the life of men: it leaves to this higher thought and this new life to develop for themselves new and fitting institutions. In this it accords with true wisdom; for all institutions that have vitality must be the natural outgrowth of the life and thought of the people.

Christianity aims at rectifying institutions only as the remoter result of the new truth and life which it inspires.

Christianity, at its introduction, found the whole world organized under the domination of the strong over the weak. Its first influence in starting humanity in a progress towards a better political constitution was to create the idea of individuality ; to create the idea of the worth and sacredness of the individual man as man, — the idea of the individual as having rights involved in his own personality, inalienable by any external power ; forbidding even the State to disregard his personal rights, to make him its tool, or to use him. In a word, it created the idea, fundamental in modern political thought, but unknown to ancient thought, that the individual is the unit of society ; that he has personal rights, and not merely privileges, derived from his membership in a dominant race, or granted to him as an inferior by a dominant race.

This great idea is fundamental in Christianity. The whole Christian system rests on it. Every man is taught to regard himself as of more worth than the gain of the whole world. Christ tasted death for every man, — the singular number, the distributive pronoun. The man of lowest caste, the outcast from society, the greatest sinner, is of so great worth in God's sight, that God's Son died for his redemption. The invitations of the gospel are for all ; the golden gate of God's grace open to every one. The Spirit of God renews men one by one. Every penitent is admitted equally near to God. Every man is called to an equal intimacy of communion with God : " Enter

into thy closet, and shut the door, and pray to thy Father in secret." No human priesthood through whom man comes to God, but Christ the one High Priest, the Mediator between God and man. Christianity, in its very idea and all its methods of administration, thus recognizing the worth and greatness of the individual man, a command would seem superfluous; and yet it is added, "Honor all men." And so Peter (while heathen thought loses the individual in the organization, regarding him as the material of the State, to be helplessly cut and bevelled and builded into the wall at the will of the ruler), — Peter, when comparing Christian society to a building, violates rhetoric, that he may acknowledge the personality of the man; and makes the stones living stones, which, by their own vital force, grow into a living temple. Everywhere, according to the Christian conception, man's institutions exist for man, not man for his institutions.

In view of the absence of this great idea from the political constitution of ancient society, we see in a new light the significance of these grand doctrines of Christianity. They introduce the first element of a new civilization, — a principle so familiar to us, that we think it self-evident, and can with difficulty conceive of a state of society in which it was unknown.

Here it is, perhaps, not too much to say, that, in bringing out this principle of the worth and rights of the individual, the political progress of society began. For if we recur to the transition from the homogeneous to the complex, in which progress begins, this transition is possible only in magnifying the individual, and setting him free from the power of the gov-

erning class grinding all its subjects into a homogeneous pulp, and thus preparing for the grander unity of society in the more complex organizations of free and constitutional government. While this recognition of individuality is wanting, as it was before Christ came, the political constitution of society can only be diversified forms of the unity and antagonism of races and the reign of force.

In thus recognizing the individual, Christianity lays the foundation for human liberty in justice and right. Naturalism can offer for this end nothing but the love of liberty. But the love of liberty is a blind instinct of Nature, stronger in the savage than in the civilized, and probably stronger in a beast of prey than in the savage. In civilization, it is necessarily subjected to restraints for the welfare and good order of society. That cannot be the safeguard of individual rights in well-ordered society which must itself be put under restraint as a condition of well-ordered society.

And this instinct seeks the liberty only of the person, family, or race, actuated by it: it takes no heed of oppression inflicted on others. The desire of liberty is essentially the same with the desire of power: it merely prompts an individual, family, or race, to break restraints on their own wills, and to attain free scope for exercising their own power. Controlled by it, men stand on the necks of prostrate men, and build their own freedom on their subjugated fellows. It is in its action selfish and malignant. It allies itself with the race-spirit, and stimulates it to severer oppression. It intensifies the spirit of domination. It chivalrously resents insults and injuries to

self, but prides itself on the privileges and power which it wins by oppressing others.

Christianity, on the contrary, relies for the protection of the personal rights of the individual against the encroachments of the State on justice. Our free institutions rest, not as our orators thoughtlessly boast, on the love of liberty, but on justice. Christianity asserts human duties and human rights, declared in a law supreme above all men, and all associations and organizations of men, — a law divine, unchanging, eternal, binding on the strong and on the weak alike.

Nor will it accept kindness in the place of justice. When the strong have established their power, it is very easy to be kind to the weak whom they have subjugated; but it is not easy to be just. It is easy to grant gifts and privileges, the very granting of which is the declaration of superior power; but Christianity demands justice.

And there is this peculiarity in the Christian teachings: Duties and rights are correlative. If I owe you a duty, you have a corresponding right. We in our selfishness put foremost our rights: it is, "My rights and your duties." But the Bible has little to say of rights, but much to say of duties. Therefore, under Christian influences, we find ourselves thoughtfully saying, "My duties and my neighbor's rights."

Christianity thus starts society on its progress towards a right political constitution, by declaring the worth of the individual, and establishing his personal rights on the immovable basis of justice.

The personality and rights of the individual, and the union of persons in a political organization, are the two polar and complementary forces in the right con-

stitution of a State. In the recognition and harmonious adjustment of the two, political wisdom most appears. It is scarcely too much to say, that, in heathen society, the first of these is wanting, and, politically, the individual is absorbed and lost in the State; and that Christianity first brought to light and made effective this fundamental element in the right constitution of a State.

I proceed to consider what, according to Christianity, is the principle of unity and organization, which is the other and complementary truth of political science.

It is not the unity of kindred or race, which is always a partial unity, producing antagonism to all beyond its circle; but it is the brotherhood of man, excluding none on account of race, condition, or character,—humanity itself the bond of fraternization and the measure of the scope of human obligation to render love and service.

Notice here, that the Christian doctrine of human brotherhood is not founded on the fact of the descent of all men from one pair: if so, Christianity itself would found its doctrine on the unity of blood, broadening its scope, but not changing its nature. On the contrary, Christianity always and emphatically teaches that the race-unity of man as descended from one pair has been the source of corruption, transgression, and woe,—a teaching, as to the malignant influence of race-unity, which all human history has in all ages terribly exemplified. So far as the brotherhood of man is concerned, it is immaterial whether all men descended from one pair, or not. Christianity founds its doctrine of the brotherhood of man, not on the

fatherhood of Adam, but on the fatherhood of God. It finds the unity of man, broad as humanity itself, in a common spiritual nature, in common spiritual ideas, relations, and interests, — all men made in the image of God; the same truth of reason as the common standard of appeal; the same law of love the common measure of duty; the same God the Father of all; the same redemption through Him who tasted death for every man; the same kingdom of God on earth, into which all may be admitted on the same conditions, and in the establishment of which all may be laborers with God; and the same expectation of immortality, and its just awards for the deeds done in the body. Over against the malignant power of race-unity and hate, Christianity boldly plants itself on the unity of man in his common spiritual nature, ideas, relations, and interests, and dares to promise that this grand fellowship and fraternity of man shall yet be realized, — “the unity OF THE SPIRIT in the bond of peace.”

And this is set forth in the very person and life of Jesus. He is the exponent to us, under human limitations, of the mind and heart of God. In him, God approaches with infinite compassion, not a favored race, but humanity itself; presenting himself as the Redeemer, equally accessible to men of every race, condition, and character, and incorporating into humanity the energy of his redeeming grace to work in the courses of human history to deliver man from sin. Jesus is also the exponent to us of the ideal man, the perfection of humanity in its struggle with sin and sorrow on earth. Yet it is remarkable that he presents the nature common to all men, rather than any peculiarities by which one man is distinguished and

separated from another. Every man has peculiarities of constitution, character, and condition, by which he is separated from his fellow-men, made unintelligible to them, thrown out of their sympathy, sometimes made repulsive to them. But it is not so with Jesus. Because he was man, he must be a man. Yet his private peculiarities never hedge him about, and shut him away from any. He is, to all, the man Christ Jesus. He was a Jew, of a distant age and a different civilization ; but he never suggests to any the idea of an outlandish man, separated and made unintelligible by the peculiarities of another race, another age and country and civilization, but only the idea of man accessible, intelligible, in full sympathy with themselves. Even the highest genius cannot escape the coloring of its age, by which its writings become in part unintelligible to later ages. Every generation must have its own literature. Scarcely a book is read fifty years after it is written. But Jesus is never antiquated. And there is nothing in him which makes him uninteresting to the rich or to the poor, to the learned or to the ignorant, to the old or to the young. But men, civilized and savage, men of every country, of every age, of every condition, come to him ; and every one meets, not peculiarities that separate, but the common humanity like his own, — the human heart throbbing responsive to his heart. Nor can any race or people appropriate him, as the Americans appropriate Washington, and the French Napoleon, saying, “ He was our hero.” The Jews cannot say, “ He was our Saviour, not yours.” No nation or race can say, “ He was ours, not yours.” He is the Saviour of man. He was a Jew ; but no

one thinks of him as identified with Jewish history, and making it illustrious. He belongs to mankind. Every sinner can say, "He is my Saviour: his work was for me."

Men are separated from each other by country, race, age, character, and condition; but all of these men, separated from and unintelligible to each other, come near to Jesus, the Son of man: they meet in him a human heart like their own. Thus, in the very person and life of Jesus, the brotherhood of man is declared. All find in him their elder brother; and through him all know each other as brethren. Thus in the very person of Christ is realized and set forth the grand idea of Christianity, that the fellowship of humanity is deeper and mightier than the alienations of race; that the characteristics of humanity are essential and permanent, the differences of race are accidental and transient; and that the malignant power of race must pass away, as men, aliens by birth, find themselves brethren in Christ.

The power and extent of race-antagonisms have been diminished by the mingling of races. But the doctrine recently broached, that the mingling of races is the only means of removing race-hatred, is simply a confession of defeat, and a surrender to the enemy. It is a despair of Christianity. Christianity makes no compromise with the race-force; it insists on the unity of the spirit; it commands love to man. With the voice of God, it demands that humanity be the bond of fraternity, and the measure of the scope of obligation to love and service.

We may now appreciate the grandeur of the epoch when Christ came revealing the brotherhood of man.

We can see the significance and sublimity of Paul's words, when he wrote to the Church at Colosse, "There is now neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free; but Christ is all, and in all;" when, on Mars' Hill, in Athens, he proclaimed to those keen-minded Greeks who called all not of their own race Barbarians, "God hath made of one blood all the nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth;" when he wrote to the Christians in imperial Rome, "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also;" thus bringing the Romans themselves down to the level of our common humanity, as, with all mankind, the object of Christian service.

This great Christian idea immediately began to penetrate the thinking of the world. To-day, commerce, the great industrial movement of our times, and all the forces of modern civilization, advance the fraternization of the races. The political movements of our time tend to unite fragmentary peoples into larger nationalities, and to unite all nations in the acknowledgment of reciprocal obligations and reciprocal helpfulness. Naturalism attributes these results to commerce, to inventions, to the spirit of the age. But we may pertinently ask, why commerce and the spirit of the age act so differently from their action in ancient times and in all heathen civilization now; why they work to establish the ideas which Christianity introduced, and to energize those elements of our civilization wherein it agrees with the teachings of Christ, and differs from the teachings of heathen wisdom.

Consider, next, how society, diversified by the Christian recognition of individuality, and united in brotherhood by spiritual ideas and relations, becomes organized in institutions. There are three institutions which may be called divine, and which will exist as long as man exists on earth, — the Family, the Church, and the State.

The Family is the institution in which men are united by birth. Christianity acknowledges it as the primary and fundamental institution of society: it consecrates it as the institution to train every generation for the kingdom of God; but it does not acknowledge it as spreading out through kindred and race to constitute the State, and divide mankind in enmity, and to subjugate the weak to serve the strong.

The Church is the association of believers spontaneously evolved by the fellowship of a common faith, a common love, and a common spiritual work; not according to the maxim, "Where the Church is, there is the Spirit," which leads to a hierarchy standing between the sinner and God to dispense God's grace, but according to the maxim, "Where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church," which leads to a church quickened by the Spirit, and arising out of the world in the newness of spiritual life.

The third divine institution is the State. The State, founded on the Christian principles already considered, — of individual rights, the reign of justice, and the brotherhood of man, — cannot be a race united by blood, and dominating over subjugated races by force. A nation is a people, of whatever races, united under the supremacy of law, and governing them-

selves through agencies and methods accordant with the law for the maintenance of justice, for the protection of the rights and the promotion of the interests of the people. Government is no longer the enforcement of the behests of a despotic will, but is the enforcement of law. Law in its highest sense is the declaration of truth and right eternal in the absolute reason of God. Human law is the declaration of the collected reason of the people; and the nearest attainable approach to the declaration of the collected reason of the people is found in the methods of popular government. I say, law is the collected reason of the people; for will cannot create law. Neither the will of one man, nor the will of a majority, nor the will of all the people, nor even the will of God, can create law. Will is but power: its place is to obey law, not to create it. The reign of will is the reign of force: the reign of law is the reign of reason. And government exists to ascertain, declare, and enforce the principles of reason, originating above the earth, exalted above the reach of human caprice, pure, bright, vivifying, burning like the sunlight; to ascertain, declare, and enforce the principles of sound wisdom and unselfish love, and the measures by which those principles can be carried into effect for the protection and welfare of the people.

Hence the modern maxim, "Governments exist for the good of the governed," displaces the maxim of all ancient and heathen States, that "the governed exist for the good of the governors." Since Christianity aims, primarily, not to rectify institutions, but to renovate individuals, you will not expect to find in the New Testament a formal exposition of the institu-

tions of government; and yet this maxim of modern civilization, that government exists for the good of the governed, is explicitly enunciated by Paul, — the first enunciation of it in the history of human thought. In the paragraph on government in the thirteenth chapter of Romans, Paul, after saying that government is a divine institution for the administration of justice, explicitly declares, “The governor is a minister of God to thee,” i.e. to the governed, “for good.” And Jesus, alluding to the fact that all existing governments were founded on force, says, “You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise authority over them;” and adds, “It shall not be so among you; but he that is great among you, let him be your servant.” Here he announces the principle of a new civilization. The old principle of domination, the strong oppressing the weak, shall not be tolerated in the Christian civilization; but all that are exalted above others are to use their superiority to serve others, — rulers the servants of the ruled. At another time, he uttered the pregnant maxim, “All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword;” that is, institutions founded on force may be expected to be overthrown by force, — a maxim of which the history of the world down to the overthrow of American slavery has been a continual verification. The thought of the Saviour is, institutions which are to be perpetuated must be founded in justice, and not on force.

2. I proceed to a second exemplification of the Christian doctrine of progress, in its application to social as distinguished from political questions.

For generations past, men have been occupied in

rectifying their political institutions. Social progress and personal growth have been comparatively forgotten. Absorbed in political conflicts, it is not strange that men have come to believe that society advances only by political revolutions; that human progress consists in the adoption of political constitutions; and that popular government and universal suffrage must remove all social evils.

But social life presents a sphere distinct from the political. If government be rightly constituted, if, so far as governmental action is concerned, every person have an unobstructed career for his talents, yet it remains undetermined what social relations, opinions, and customs will supervene, and how far these social relations, opinions, and customs will obstruct the career of individuals, and restrain them from the opportunity to make the most of themselves in the honest use of their powers.

On this social sphere, the thinking of the people is now concentrating. The domestic relations, the relations of woman to man and to society, the relations of labor and capital, the methods and character of education, the organization and direction of industrial agencies, are the subjects forcing themselves on the public mind. In this country and in Europe, people are no longer content with political rights: they are using political power to gain a better social condition.

According to Naturalism, the social condition must be determined by the same forces which determine the political,—race-unity and antagonism, and the subjugation of the weak by the strong. Caste is thus incorporated into the constitution of society.

Slavery becomes universal, the oppressed foundation on which the superstructure of society rests. Labor is degrading; dependence on one's earnings for a livelihood is ignoble; dignity and honor belong to living in idleness on the labor of inferiors; the only scope for honorable enterprise is in politics and war. Woman is subject, first to her father, then to her husband, and is known only in her relation and subjection to them. Such were the characteristics of society in Greece and Rome, the most advanced of heathen nations.

In the progress of Christian nations, the social wrongs which are immediately connected with political institutions—caste, serfdom, and slavery—are passing away. But the energy of our civilization has passed largely into industrial pursuits, which now give scope to the greatest talent and the largest and most honorable enterprise, occupying in this respect the place which war occupied in ancient civilization, and drawing away many of the best minds even from politics. This is itself a grand result of the honor given to labor in Christian civilization.

In this industrial sphere, the old principle still asserts itself. Our systems of political economy recognize solely the desire of gain, and selfish competition in its pursuit. These are the acknowledged forces that must control business. The one aim is to get on. Society becomes a scramble; every one crowding and hustling his neighbor in eagerness to get ahead. Everywhere restlessness and anxiety; the capacity of contentment lost; a civilization whose first principle is, "Help yourself," and of which the legitimate developments are speculation and false bal-

ance-sheets, lying advertisements and unscrupulous adulteration, railroad-swindles, gambling speculations, and legislative and judicial bribery. In the industrial enterprise of modern life, the old struggle of force re-appears ; and the strong seize and use the weak as tools for their own gain. Capital, when it has opportunity, oppresses labor. The laborer is sacrificed to multiply the products of his labor. The workman is of less account than the product of his work.

On the other hand, labor is finding its strength, and laying hold of the method of association, — that powerful agency, the constant use of which is one of the distinctive characteristics of modern civilization, and is itself an incidental result of that principle of Christian civilization, which affirms the unity of men by common ideas and interests, and not merely by common birth and blood. This movement is, as yet, little more than the organizing of numbers against wealth, force against force ; the old struggle to determine which is the strongest. Hence we find it marked by dangerous errors.

According to our prevalent habit, engendered by the long concentration of thought on political reform, those engaged in this movement look to political action, and expect from it what political action cannot give. In Europe, they demand the reconstruction of society in socialism, and hold the government bound to furnish work for the laborer ; in this country, they demand eight-hour laws, and other legislation as powerless against the fixed laws of trade as legislation, enacting that the nights be shortened or the summer lengthened, would be powerless against the laws of

Nature: or they demand legislation fatal to the interests of labor; as the abrogation of interest on capital loaned, which, could it by any possibility be enforced, would immediately close a large part of the business of the country, throw many laborers out of employ, and reduce wages to a minimum. On the other hand, they forget, in their social reform, the very principles which have been toilsomely won in political progress. It has been the struggle of centuries to establish the rights of the individual against the encroachments of society, and to give to every man an unobstructed career for his talents; but now the Trades' Unions re-establish in the social sphere the tyranny over the individual which is no longer tolerated from the civil government. They close the career for talents by forbidding any to learn a trade except the son of one already employed in it; thus going back to the old narrowness and exclusiveness of race. The guilds of the middle ages, which long since passed away before the spirit of modern freedom, are thus re-established; and the rights of the individual, which it has cost the struggle of centuries to wrest from oppressive governments, are blindly surrendered to irresponsible social organizations by the very men most deeply interested in the preservation of those rights. In this movement, I scarcely see, as yet, on either side, any serious recognition of obligation to society, and solicitude to discharge it; any carefulness to know what is duty, or to refer the conduct of business to Christian principles. It is still the old cry of selfishness, "My rights, and your duties;" never "My duties, and your rights." In the new sphere of industrial enterprise, with new methods and new weapons, it is still the old

struggle to wrest advantages from others for the aggrandizement of self.

Christianity approaches society here with the same principles of justice and love which have been so effective in political progress. It extends over all industrial pursuits the law of ministering to others which Christ enjoined and exemplified. It proclaims that the object of industrial enterprise is not merely gain to self, but equally service to others. It presents as the fundamental law of business the law of reciprocity ; in every legitimate business transaction, the parties are reciprocally to serve each other ; the value given must be a full equivalent for the value received ; and every bargain shall be intended to be equally beneficial to both parties. It teaches that no man may use a fellow-man. He may use minerals, vegetables, brutes, the ocean and the land, electricity, heat, steam, all the powers of Nature, — he may use these for his instruments, or consume them for his enjoyment ; but, when he deals with a man, he may never use him as an instrument for his own gains, but must treat with him as an equal, and, in every transaction, render a service equivalent to what he receives. It teaches that the only legitimate business is a business which produces value ; which adds to the wealth and comfort of society ; which, by its prosecution, renders service to mankind. It teaches, that, when one has advantages superior to another, the strong must serve the weak, and not use his superiority to wring unrequited service from the weak. Wealth, honor, learning, superiority of any kind, are not gains greedily grasped for selfish aggrandizement, but trusts to be administered for the service of man-

kind. In this sense, a man is to sell all that he has, and give to the poor; not that he is to turn his estate into money, and fling it into the great ocean of pauperism, ministering a temporary relief, and leaving all the causes of poverty as powerful as before; not that he is to part it with his neighbors, seeking an impossible equality in the distribution of wealth: but that his business be itself a service to society; that, in every particular transaction thereof, he render an equivalent for what he receives; and that he hold and administer his accumulated gains as a trust for the service of society, for the establishment of Christ's kingdom of justice and love. And never, on any of the social questions agitating the community, will there be rest till they are settled on the broad and enduring foundation of Christian justice, rendering to all their dues; and of Christian love, constraining the strong to serve the weak.

3. The third exemplification of the Christian doctrine of progress is in its application to the progress of man as an individual. Given a right constitution of the State and a social condition ruled by Christian love, what, then, will be the development and progress of the individual man?

Here we reach the great question discussed ever since philosophy began, "What is the *summum bonum*, the highest well-being of man?" Is it the development of the man to his highest perfection and worthiness? or is it only his sustentation and gratification? I will not go back to the discussion of the past. For the Naturalistic doctrine of the present day, I cite as the latest, and certainly an authoritative declaration, Prof. Huxley, in his recent lecture on "The Physical

Basis of Life." He selects one of Goethe's Venetian Epigrams, and declares that into it "Goethe has condensed a survey of all the powers of mankind." It is this: "Why so bustle the people, and cry? To get food, to beget children, and to feed them as best they can. Farther attaineth no man, put himself however he will." This the highest possibility of humanity, the ideal of all that human progress can attain, — to get food, to beget children, and feed them the best one can! Lord Brougham, expressing, perhaps extravagantly, his expectation of intellectual progress, said he hoped the time would come when every man in England would read Bacon. William Cobbett wittily replied, that he would be contented if the time should come when every man in England would eat bacon, — an answer not less pertinent than witty, if it meant merely that the removal of English pauperism was a more urgent need than the diffusion of intellectual culture, but an answer well fitted to express the highest hope and promise of Prof. Huxley. The Hebrew prophets foretell a happy future for man, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God: this new gospel foretells a happy future, when the earth shall be full of bacon. There is nothing better, except in degree; as, for example, the realization of the wish of Henry IV., that every one of his subjects might have a chicken in the pot; or, higher still, but in the same kind, what is indicated in the teaching of our political economists, that the existence of an idle and luxurious class is a benefit to society, as supplying a motive for exertion to the less favored classes; in allusion to which, Mr. Froude says, "They are like Olympian gods, condescending

to show themselves in their empyrean, and to say to their worshippers, 'Make money, money enough, and you shall become as we are, and shoot grouse and drink champagne all the days of your lives.' " This, then, is the highest possibility of man, the multiplication of comforts, all the modern conveniences. This being the highest good, sentiment, aspiration, and enthusiasm, looking to any thing higher, are fanatical: they disappear in the solid realism of life. To sacrifice comfort for principle becomes unwise; to sacrifice life for it becomes absurd.

Christianity, on the contrary, teaches the worth of man above his possessions and conditions. The gain of the whole world is dearly bought at the sacrifice of manhood. All the agencies of Christianity are to quicken and ennoble the man himself to a higher life and a grander work. Naturalism teaches that man exists to be ministered unto, blessed only in what is given to him. Christianity presents in the Saviour, suffering, toiling, and dying in love for others, the ideal of human perfection, and declares that man's highest well-being is, not in being ministered unto, but in ministering. A brute finds its highest good in being well fed, in being fat and sleek; but a man cannot be groomed and foddered into blessedness. Christianity points rather to a man like Paul, foregoing the prospect of distinction and power, sacrificing his property and his good name, having no home, exposed to the perils of the sea and the land, imprisoned, scourged, put to death; a life which, according to Naturalism, was a total failure, attended with the loss of all things. Christianity points to Paul, suffering yet achieving, losing all things, yet with all-

prevailing love blessing the world : it points to him as a type of the highest success and well-being of man.

The contrast cannot be more marked. Mr. Huxley well cautions his readers, "In accepting these conclusions, you are placing your feet on the first rung of a ladder, which, in most people's estimation, is the reverse of Jacob's, and leads to the antipodes of heaven."

I will glance at a single thought touching the work which we have to do in promoting individual culture and growth. The type of character developed under despotism, and in all the civilizations in which society is organized under dominant force, is distinctively characterized by obedience, by submission to authority, and deference of inferiors to superiors. This culminates in the Japanese hari-kiri, in which a high official who has offended the sovereign humbly asks permission to atone for his offence, and to wipe out his dishonor, by disembowelling himself ; and then, clothed in his robes of state, he solemnly enters a temple designated for the purpose, and, in the presence of high officers, makes confession of his offence, and performs the horrible act, — a stately and ceremonious but terrible expiation, in which submission to authority reaches a kind of sublimity.

But when Christian love, recognizing the rights of man, begins to stimulate to political self-government, it develops a type of character marked by self-assertion and self-reliance ; it unsettles the faith of men in what is old and established both in doctrine and institutions ; it makes men defiant of authority, sceptical, revolutionary. These are evils incident to the transition

from the domination of force to the government of reason and law. But Christian truth and love cannot complete their work till they carry society through this transition state, and reproduce on a new basis the faith, the submissiveness, the reverence, which, in the overturn of the old system, we have lost. Loyalty to law, and reverence for humanity, must take the place of the old loyalty to kings, and reverence for superiors; the justice which scrupulously respects the rights of others, the love which quickens self-devotement to the service of others, must take the place of the fear of the resistless power of the rulers, and bring back in the higher plane and loftier life of self-government a more worthy obedience, reverence, and order, than domination by superior power ever enforced.

For if democracy means only the dead weight of numbers rolling over society like a garden-roller, crushing every thing level under it, then democracy itself becomes a mere government of force; and such a democracy is the most terrible form of government of force. The autocrat is one against millions: he knows, that if he pushes his oppression too far, and his bayonets begin to think, it is all over with him. But if the people exercise despotism by the mere force of numbers, millions dominating thousands, there is no earthly power great enough to intimidate them. If they do not fear God, there is no earthly power to make them fear. It is then essential to Christian civilization, even in a democracy, that the people be trained individually to reverence truth and right and law; to know that will, even the will of the majority, is incompetent to create right or rightful law; and that so the

people bow their immeasurable might in loyalty to truth and justice, and create law, which expresses the eternal principles of reason, and not the impulse of passion, nor the caprice of will.

And Christianity meets this necessity; for, in all its influences, it approaches men individually to make them new creatures in Jesus Christ, and to quicken them to grow in grace and the knowledge of God. It expects the substantial progress of society to be realized only as individual men become wiser and better, and better customs and better institutions grow out of the better life of the people.

I will simply mention, in closing, these practical lessons which the subject forces on our attention:—

1. Have faith in progress. It is of the essence of Christianity, and is assured by the promise of God: “We brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise.”

Naturalism has no word of promise. Its language is, What has been will be. Slavery, tyranny, pauperism, war, have always been in the world, the necessary developments of human instincts under the cosmic forces of external Nature. They always will be in the world, necessarily developed from the same causes: all efforts to remove them are sheer fanaticism.

But Christianity is not the product of Nature, but of spirit: it reveals the redeeming grace of God entering into human history; it confronts the forces of Nature, the antagonism of race, the arrogance of despotic power, the greed of gain, with new principles, with divine redemption, with the gospel of glad tidings to man; and it has the right to promise a

future better than the past. It will not admit that that which has been must be; for, in its very essence, it is a power of renovation. Its language is always, "Behold, I make all things new." "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold." "He that is feeble among them shall be as David, and the house of David as the angel of the Lord."

2. Have faith in truth, justice, and love. There is something more than human working in human history,—the redeeming grace of God silently quickening the growth of his kingdom. There are forces working in human life, and determining the courses of history, other than the instincts of Nature, the greed of selfishness, the sharpness of cunning: there are spiritual forces, faith in God and love to man, the sense of duty, spiritual aspirations, sentiments, and enthusiasms,—forces always acting in society over against the forces of Nature,—forces which sometimes lift a man, as in a chariot of fire and horses of fire, above the instincts and selfishness of natural life; which sometimes lift a whole people above all low and selfish impulses, rapt in a white-heat of enthusiasm. Therefore no man can rightly understand his own times, or predict the issue of any agitation of society, unless his own soul is in sympathy with these spiritual forces. "I understand more than the ancients, because I have kept Thy precepts." Keeping God's precepts enables one to understand the spiritual energies working in his generation, opens his mind to receive from the gospel-promise new ideas unknown to the ancients, and to expect their realization, and so gives him a far-reaching insight into the future, and power

to predict its issues. The keeping of God's commandments, and the sympathy with the spiritual forces working in history which it insures, are essential qualifications for Christian statesmanship. This explains why American politics failed to understand the significance of recent events, and to predict, or even remotely to anticipate, the result, so terrible yet so sublime, which has just been realized; this explains why demagogues, recognizing in society only the instincts of Nature and the greed of selfishness, seek advancement by advocating repudiation, or whatever at the moment they think will minister to selfishness, only to find that they have under-estimated the virtue of the people, and frustrated the cunning schemes of their own ambition. In like manner, it is only he who by spiritual sympathy and discernment can see the kingdom of God who is able to understand the missionary work which aims at the conversion of the world. To mere Naturalism, the enterprise is wholly Quixotic; but it is an enterprise wise, sublime, certain to prevail to the pure in heart, who see God. The spiritual mind alone can see the kingdom of heaven; and the man who cannot see it is blind to the grandest energies working in human history, and must be wholly astray in interpreting his own times, in predicting the future, and in counselling what course of action is the wisest in any emergency.

It follows that they who would divorce the moral reformation of society from the Christian religion are incompetent to be leaders in any moral reform. They lack spiritual discernment. They cannot see the kingdom of God. They are blind leaders of the blind, and both shall fall into the ditch.

3. Consecrate yourselves in faith in God, and, as workers together with him, to the service of man, to realize the great promise, and extend God's kingdom through the world. Open your heart to the love of man which Christ felt, the undying enthusiasm for humanity which he has kindled. Acknowledge with Paul your indebtedness, as much as in you lies, to Greek and Barbarian, to the wise and unwise. Accept Christ's law, — "the strong to serve the weak;" accept toil, suffering, poverty, death, if need be, to live as Christ did, — not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

This is the invitation to the wedding of the King's Son, to participate in his joy, as, coming down to earth, he takes humanity, fallen, suffering, and polluted, as his bride; lifts her to his right hand; arrays her in the beauties of holiness, and makes her forever one in purity and blessedness with himself.

How contemptible the excuses, — in all ages the same, — "I have bought a piece of ground; I have married a wife; I have bought five yoke of oxen; I am so occupied with private affairs and selfish ends, that I cannot come"!

"'Tis a vile life, that, like a garden pool,
Lies stagnant in the round of personal loves;
That has no ear save for the tinkling lute
Set to small measures; deaf to all the beats
Of that large music rolling o'er the world:
A miserable, petty, low-roofed life,
That knows the mighty orbit of the skies
Through nought save light and dark in its own cabin."

From this mean life of self — its utmost compass

the circuit of what you can clasp in your own arms — rise into the great life of faith and love, — the life of God, which brings you into fellowship with Paul and the goodly company of martyrs and apostles ; which brings you into participation with God in his work of redemption ; which enlarges your interest, your ownership, your sphere of action and of joy, to the compass of all on which rests the sunshine of God's redeeming love.

II.

POSITIVISM AS RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT AND DESTINY OF THE INDIVIDUAL.

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THE questions, "What am I?" "What is my destiny?" "And by what means can I attain the end of my being?" are among the most important which a man can ask himself. But they are questions having significance, when taken together, very much according to the answer given to the first; that is, very much as one regards himself connected with the world of Nature simply, and hence to be developed by her order and method: or as connected at the same time, and primarily, with the supernatural world, the offspring of a personal God, and made in his image; hence to be developed by agencies that are supersensuous.

And, whatever may be the result reached in our investigation, we start, it may be freely confessed, with some hypothesis or presupposition, whether to find ourselves circumscribed by the positive laws of Nature, or to find ourselves connected with the spiritual world,—it may or it may not be the *prudens quæstio* of Bacon, the "fore-thoughtful query" of Coleridge, so necessary in all successful advance

towards the discovery of truth. Even positive science cannot claim to follow the Baconian method of investigation if it attempts to exclude the "dry light" of reason, *lumen siccum*. And it does not become us, in any sphere, to refuse the light of reason, which has already anticipated our course of inquiry, least of all when we would apprehend the full capacity and wants of the individual soul.

On account of the indefiniteness of what is called Positivism, — its name not indicating its character, and its bounds not being set, — it may not be easy to make clear to our minds just what it is, and all the more difficult, perhaps, to set forth clearly its defects. But since it claims to do for man all he needs, and to do it better than any other system, we ought, if possible, to determine from what it is, and, on philosophic principles, whether or not it is able to fulfil its claims. But, since Christianity claims to meet and satisfy wants of the human soul that no other system can reach and satisfy, it is but just to examine Positivism in the light of that which it opposes or ignores. Thus shall we have a standard by which to test it. Or, by putting the two in comparison with each other, we shall better understand, whether, on the one hand, Christianity, with its involved morality and spiritual philosophy, may be superseded by Positivism; or whether, on the other, the latter system is guilty of radical defects, which cannot be supplied within its own sphere.

It is proposed to make the investigation with special reference to the individual, not attempting an application to civilization and the destiny of the race, only in so far as the discussion must bear in

that direction impliedly, and by reason of the inseparable connection between the education of the individual and of the race. It may be said, however, that, if Positivism can do for the individual all he needs without doubt it can also do all things needful for the race. Hence, the greater importance of our inquiry from the proposed point of view.

We must first seek to gain a conception of what Positivism is as a basis of education for man. If we interrogate Comte, (and who can be better authority?) he tells us that the law of human progress is this: "Each branch of our knowledge passes successively through three different theoretical conditions, — the theological or fictitious, the metaphysical or abstract, and the scientific or positive." The character of these is "essentially different, and radically opposed to each other." "In the final, the positive state," says Comte, "the mind has given over the vain search after absolute notions, the origin and destination of the universe, and the causes of phenomena," — i.e., fictitious theology and abstract metaphysics, both of which he discards, — "and applies itself to the study of their laws; that is, their invariable relations of succession and resemblance. Reasoning and observation duly combined are the means of this knowledge." * And that this philosophy would have us deal with facts simply is still more evident from Comte's words, when he says, "Our business is — seeing how vain is every research into what are called causes, whether first or final — to pursue an accurate discovery of these laws, with a

* Comte's Positive Philosophy (tr. by Miss Martineau), pp. 25, 26.

view of reducing them to the smallest possible number." * The "ultimate perfection of the positive system would be to represent all phenomena as particular aspects of a single grand fact; such as gravitation, for instance." † Observe, also, what the master thinks of making his an exclusive system: "All our fundamental conceptions having become homogeneous, the positive state will be fully established. It can never again change its character, though it will be forever in course of development by additions of new knowledge. Having acquired the character of universality, which has been the only advantage with the two preceding systems, it will supersede them by its natural superiority, and leave to them only an historical existence." ‡

We should thus be justified in making of Positivism the following affirmations: First, it claims to include all the knowledge which can concern the human mind; second, its range of possible knowledge is confined to the facts of Nature,—first to observed phenomena, and then to generalizations from them, which last are styled laws; third, it would bring man within the range of natural objects, not admitting the antithesis between natural and moral science.

We have thus an answer to the question, "What is Positivism?" Our preliminary statement, however, should indicate the kind of education which would rest on this foundation. That a very important revolution in education is sought and expected by advocates of the system, is without dispute. Thus Comte himself, although directing his personal atten-

* Positive Philosophy, p. 28.

† Ibid., p. 26.

‡ Ibid., p. 30.

tion less to this point, says, "The best minds are agreed that our European education, still essentially theological, metaphysical, and literary, must be superseded by a positive training conformable to our time and needs."* If the system is true, and can maintain itself in its exclusive claims, of course such a change as is here intimated must be made.

But the master gave himself mainly to the collocation of the sciences, and left the application to be made in this direction, to large extent, by his disciples, or, if it please them better, let me rather say, by those independent minds, who, thinking like Comte, build essentially like him; so that, in the main features, they are agreed: wherefore it matters little who is to have the credit of the foundation.

Herbert Spencer, the ablest of them all, perhaps, certainly with the exception of John Stuart Mill, has spoken directly on the subject of education; and the little work in which he sets forth his views of that "positive training" which would be "conformable to our time and needs" will probably exert more influence on the public mind than all his other works combined. And he surely deserves credit for having spoken in it so vigorously as to have awakened thought on a vital subject. From this book I quote a passage which gives at once the author's conception of the end and the breadth of education for man: "How to live?—that is the essential question for us;

* Pos. Phil., p. 34: "This, then, is the first great result of the positive philosophy,—the manifestation, by experiment, of the laws which rule the intellect in the investigation of truth; and, as a consequence, the knowledge of the general rules suitable for that object." "The second effect of the positive philosophy, an effect not less important, and far more urgently wanted, will be to regenerate education."—*Ibid.*

not how to live in a mere material sense only, but in the widest sense. The general problem which comprehends every special problem is, the right ruling of conduct in all directions, under all circumstances,—in what way to treat the body, in what way to treat the mind, in what way to manage our affairs, in what way to bring up a family, in what way to behave as a citizen, in what way to utilize all those sources of happiness which Nature supplies, how to use all our faculties to the greatest advantage of ourselves and others, how to live completely; and this, being the great thing needful for us to learn, is, by consequence, the great thing which education has to teach.” *

What kind of an education, then, will teach us how to live, which is the great thing needful for us to learn? I ask the question, not for the sake of discussing it from this point of view, but here answer briefly for Positivists (Scientists and Naturalists may be included) thus: Since man is from and has to do with Nature on every hand, teach him fully to know and conform to her laws: so shall he understand “how to live in the widest sense.”

Before entering on our main discussion, which must be from a different standpoint, in justness to the Positivists, and to assure them that we oppose their system, not for what it includes, but rather for what it does not include, let us here say, that the study of Nature, which they advocate, may both instruct the intellect, and be of practical utility to man. None would be so unwise as to deny this. We are

* Education, Intellectual, Moral, and Physical, pp. 30, 31.

in and connected with a world of Nature. And what a possibility of knowing the laws of the universe! When assured that the astronomer can become so exact in his calculations as to determine that a planet not before known must exist in a certain part of the heavens, and, on turning his telescope in the proper direction, finds in place and bulk the very body he expected to see there, we can almost pardon the lecturer who would have his "man of the world," born of Nature and developed by her, so gain the mastery over Nature, that he could build or repair the planetary system, should that become lost or broken, bating the slight difference between discovering the laws of a universe and creating a universe.

But, far this side of stars and planets, Nature supplies many sources of happiness which may be utilized through a knowledge of her laws. Her mechanical powers have done much for as used by man. How many combinations, too, have been learned in the chemical laboratory! When we think of the progress of invention,—many valuable discoveries preceding, others keeping pace with, those of steam and the telegraph, which we might not inappropriately place at the head of the list,—who can doubt Nature has many valuable lessons yet to teach man, if willing to sit in docility at her feet; lessons that shall, on the one hand, far more diminish the toils, and, on the other, add to the comforts, of life?—thanks to those students of Nature who have so wisely and patiently interrogated as to learn her secrets, and who have then as generously made them known to us. We will be grateful for every step of progress made by scientific men, in whatever department, and whether the

advance be as to method or new facts and laws discovered.

Now, that the education hoped for by Comte, and advocated, among others, by Spencer in England, and Youmans in this country, is one that is to be mainly, not to say exclusively, secured by scientific study in the sense above explained, is evident from the writings of these men, just as it must be, in order to consist with the first principles of Positivism; which I trust will more fully appear as we proceed.

But having prepared the way by thus stating what Positivism is, and what education, according to its fundamental postulates and its chief advocates, would be in its leading characteristic, I now ask you so to change your point of view, that you may form an estimate of Positivism in the light of that which it opposes or sets at naught.

It avowedly opposes metaphysics and theology; but, between the discarding of metaphysics (so called) and theology (so called), it virtually denies also a moral responsibility. Hence it would really set aside, by ignoring, if not by openly opposing, —

1. A Personal God as taught in Christian Theism.
2. A Proper Freedom and Moral Responsibility; and,
3. A Rational or Supersensuous Philosophy.

It is therefore necessary to examine Positivism in the light thrown upon it from these several stand-points, if we would appreciate its defects, and how radical they are; its actual tendencies, and how it ought to be treated as well as regarded.

The order above indicated, chosen for the sake of

a more marked contrast between truth and error, it is hoped, will, in the end, justify itself.

Let us take the highest form of the contrast first; viz., that of man's relation to a personal God, affirmed in Christian Theism, set at nought by Positivism.

If the end must determine the means, as will be admitted, we must needs keep in view man's destiny, if we would appreciate what is required for realizing the end of his being; that is, under what influences he should be trained and moulded as man.

A Christian Theism (and we must here observe some things true of it, — true, not merely because affirmed in a system of Christian doctrine, but true also as affirmed in the moral and religious consciousness, — true as responded to in the spiritual wants of man as man, and as a sinner in need of what is proffered in revealed religion), — a Christian Theism makes neither man on earth, nor Nature, but a personal God, its centre; while it estimates man from his possibilities and final destiny, — always and primarily as related to the personal centre of the whole system, — and would educate him accordingly; accounting that a failure which comes short of the true end, and that a false method which disregards man's final destiny.

Christianity, I affirm, places God at the centre, not less than modern astronomy requires the sun to be regarded as the centre of the solar system; requiring that man, himself a finite person, should maintain his right relation to the Infinite Personality, in like manner as the earth must revolve around the sun, and not all other bodies around it. To apply the

analogy just suggested a little further : I could not give an adequate explanation of the diurnal and annual revolutions, the inclination of axis, and the various phenomena of the earth on which we stand, till I should make the sun my centre of observation. But, in estimating man himself, were it any more consistent or reliable to assume him or Nature to be my centre, than it would be, in astronomy, to return from the Copernican to the Ptolemaic system of the universe ? And yet, Positivism my guide, I must do this.

Again : I find the earth designed to revolve around the sun, dependent upon the great central luminary, and deriving from him her light and heat, and that by which it continues a living world. So must we say that the human spirit, made by and for God, derives from him, in like manner, its light and heat, and the maintenance of its finite life.

Moreover, if God is man's moral centre, what must it be to break this law of relation ? Let the law which holds the earth to the sun be broken, to apply once again our illustration, and the result would be loss of light, loss of heat, loss of life, to this one planet, — not to speak of the immense discord thence resulting to the system of which the earth is part. So let man break from God, deflect from his orbit (which he does by disobedience), and there would result to the individual soul loss of light from the great central Sun, loss of heat from the Father's loving heart, loss of life from the one living Fountain, — not to speak of the discord thence resulting to the moral system of which the individual is part.

But these results, just indicated, are not all. Something further must and does ensue when sin disturbs

the moral relation of man to his Maker. Keeping prominent, as we must, the personal relation, there inevitably results, sin being committed, on the one side (that of Him who rules in righteousness over all moral beings), displeasure, — personal displeasure ; and, on the other side (that of the sinner), a consciousness of this displeasure, — a keen sense of the divine disapproval, which is higher than, though connected with, remorse, and so different from all violations of Nature as to their effects, that we must affirm it to be a difference in kind. Shall we call it a rendering to the transgressor according to his desert? It surely is not what some would fondly call the “natural consequences” of wrong-doing, but higher than and superadded to these. But does it not belong to the soul in its spiritual and personal relation to God? Because there are laws of Nature, we are not therefore to blind our minds to the existence and vast import of this higher law. It is true, Nature has laws ; and these, violated, have their penalty : but the higher law of spiritual relation is no less real, no less binding, and no less certain in its penalty when violated. And is it any less consistent, let me ask, that He who rules the spiritual world by spiritual laws should make these laws effective, than that he should make the laws of Nature inexorable? “Sin being supposed (if we speak of sin at all within the sphere of Nature), it must meet its natural consequences,” Positivism would say. “Sin being supposed, it must meet, in addition to these, the positive displeasure of God,” Christianity affirms.

But Christian Theism provides for man a remedial system, for which the most of us feel there is occasion.

In this is expressed the highest law by which human destiny is to be determined. It defines the sinner's personal relation to the Mediator. In our present sinful condition, we cannot stop short of this specific law; nor can we go beyond it. It is, and is to be, the grand determiner of human destiny. If sin causes us to break from God, this, and this alone, restores us to our right relation, and enables us to move again in our proper orbit around the great personal Centre. Christianity will not allow us to disregard sin, or the expiation for its guilt, called by Cousin "the second law of order:"* nor will it permit us to deny its moral bondage, nor yet to hope for an escape from our guilt and bondage, otherwise than through that agency whereby we regain what we have lost, and reach our destiny; to wit, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. And does not Christian Theism make this law as imperative as the most central one in Nature is important? It makes this, and a personal regard for and interest in it, essential, through the entire development as well as final destiny of man.

Now, I have not said these things in respect to Christianity for the sake of bringing new things to your ears, only what all know to be true, but to present before your intelligent minds a test by which rightly to judge of a system which ignores Christianity; by which to measure that system which estimates man from an earthly standpoint, and would educate

* "The first law of order is to be faithful to virtue, and to that part of virtue which is related to society; to wit, justice: but, if one is wanting in that, the second law of order is to expiate one's fault; and it is expiated by punishment." — COUSIN: *True, Beautiful, and Good*, p. 320 (n.).

him for this life: in other words, it is that you may better understand the treatment which personal religion receives at the hands of Positivism.

That this system finds no occasion for a chapter on religious training, while expounding its doctrine of human development, may appear quite as evident as in any way, perhaps, by recurring to Spencer. It is true, out of respect to the religious sentiment of the community, he says others may form their own supplements in this direction: he is only concerned that his remarks should be accepted as far as he goes.*. But that he did not desire to go himself, or have others go, farther, appears from a careful reading of his works. For one thing, education with him should teach man to live "in the widest sense;" yet there is no religious sense in which he finds him needing instruction. He "confines his inquiries to a nearer and much more neglected field." Again: Spencer gives "the kinds of activities which constitute human life according to their naturally arranged classification;" but he finds among these no place for the religious, unless that place is to be found among "those miscellaneous activities which make up the leisure part of life devoted to the tastes and feelings."† Moreover, according to him, the man of science, "by asserting the eternal principles of things and the necessity of conforming to them, proves himself intrinsically religious."‡ This may be a religion of Nature: it is not that of a personal God.

In his "Essays," Spencer seems, in fact, to regard

* See *Education*, &c., pp. 217, 218.

† *Education*, p. 32.

‡ *Ibid.*, 91, 92.

religion as superstition ;* and, in his "First Principles," he says in so many words, "The atheistic, the pantheistic, and the theistic hypotheses contain the same ultimate element," which is "an absolute mystery," the "utterly inscrutable power which the universe manifests to us."† "To this conclusion," he says again, "science irresistibly arrives as it reaches its confines ; while to this conclusion religion is irresistibly driven by criticism."‡ We have here a dark background to knowledge and being : there is no proper recognition of a personal God to be known, loved, and worshipped. It need no longer seem to us strange, that this writer, able to express clearly and forcibly what he really believes, should leave others to fill the blank, if thought needful to have any thing said about religious education.

* See Essays, especially that on Manners. "That daily curbing of the lower nature and curbing of the higher nature, which out of cannibals and devil-worshippers has evolved philanthropists, lovers of peace, and haters of superstition, cannot fail to evolve out of these men as much superior to them as they are to their progenitors." "When human nature has grown into conformity with the moral law, there will need no judges and statute-books ; when it spontaneously takes the right course in all things, as in some things it does already, prospects of future reward or punishment will not be wanting as incentives ; and, when fit behavior has become instinctive, there will need no code of ceremonies to say how behavior shall be regulated" (p. 137). "Simultaneously with the decline in the influence of priest-hoods and in the fear of eternal torments, simultaneously with the mitigation of political tyranny, the growth of popular power, and the amelioration of criminal codes, has taken place the diminution of formalities, and the fading of distinctive modes, now so observable" (p. 133). "That law, religion, and manners are thus related," to wit, "are divergent branches of a general and once indivisible control ;" "that their respective kinds of operation come under one generalization ; that they have in certain contrasted characteristics of men a common support and a common danger, — will, however, be most clearly seen by discovering that they have a common origin." Spencer's "evolution" theory is not less obvious here than his estimate of religion. † First Principles, p. 36. ‡ Ibid., p. 108.

But Spencer is not alone. The whole class, if they do not altogether agree with him in "First Principles," do substantially agree with him in ignoring a personal God with whom individual man has any practical concern at all. They may allow to weak minds a religion, or at least a name for one, before they become strong enough to think independently of God like themselves; but it is nothing better than an empty name.* Nay, but in the deepest earnestness tell me, if Christianity is true, is not Positivism defective? And in proportion as Christian Theism, with its personal God, and remedial system, the gospel of Christ, is important for man, as bearing on his destiny and that training which is requisite to it, must we not, in the same proportion, pronounce Positivism,

* It is suggestive of deeper truth than the author's system recognizes to read the following concessions of Spencer: "Even now, for the great mass of men, unable through lack of culture to trace out with due clearness those good and bad consequences which conduct brings round through the established order of the Unknowable, it is needful that there should be vividly depicted future torments and future joys, — pains and pleasures of a definite kind, produced in a manner direct and simple enough to be clearly imagined."

"Indeed, were it not, that, throughout the progress of the race, men's experiences of the effects of conduct have been slowly generalized into principles; were it not that these principles have been from generation to generation insisted on by parents, upheld by public opinion, sanctified by religion, and enforced by threats of eternal damnation for disobedience; were it not, that, under these potent influences, habits have been modified, and feelings proper to them made innate; were it not, in short, that we have been rendered in a considerable degree organically moral, — it is certain that disastrous results would ensue from the removal of those strong and distinct motives which the current belief supplies. Even as it is, those who relinquish the faith in which they have been brought up for this most abstract faith in which science and religion unite, may not uncommonly fail to act up to their convictions" (First Principles, pp. 117, 118). If it were not for the salutary influences wrought by religion in the past, it might be unsafe to abolish it now; and, as it is, the experiment may be a little hazardous!

on this first count, to be woefully, because radically, defective?

We pass to our second point of view, that of morals, that we may determine what Positivism has to give in this sphere. Without doubt, moral freedom is involved in Christianity. It will, however, aid to a comprehensive estimate if we take this direct and independent view.

Let us start by affirming briefly the truth as to man's freedom. It is, that there is a valid and immutable distinction between right and wrong; that man, having reason, can see and intuitively apprehend the right; that all instinctively feel the obligation of the moral imperative; and, moreover, that man, in his original constitution free, can will the right or wrong; that is, that man, a person, not a thing, is, by being such, capable of full responsibility as a moral agent.

Under sin, the condition of the human will may be one of bondage, needing a divine power to liberate it; and yet this bondage is from sin, begotten in the very sphere of freedom and by the will itself: so that full responsibility for character ever remains,—a fact attested both by the consciousness of freedom and by the feeling of remorse.

Comparing Positivism with this test, we now ask, Does it, can it, treat man as morally free and responsible? I am confident we must answer this question in the negative. "But what," you may ask, "do Spencer and others mean when they speak as they do of moral discipline?" They mean precisely this: "Teach your child not to run his head against Nature;

he thus knows morality: let him observe the laws of Nature; he is then virtuous."

"Have we not here," asks Spencer, "the guiding principle in moral education?" And what is the principle? This,—that children be made to experience the true consequences of their conduct; that is, their "natural re-actions,"—nothing less, nothing more.*

Youmans says, "The very term 'human nature' indicates man's place in that universal order which it is the proper office of science to explore."† It is not difficult to draw the inference, which must be this: "Man's freedom is the freedom of Nature."

And Bain declares "the whole series of phrases connected with the will, freedom, choice, deliberation, self-determination, power to act if we will," to be "contrived to foster in us a feeling of artificial importance and dignity."‡

Mill, likewise, holds that we have, in no case of causation, evidence "of any thing more than what experience informs us of; and it informs us of nothing except immediate, invariable, and unconditional sequence." "I can indeed influence my own volitions, but only as other people can influence my volitions,

* "Is it not manifest, that, as 'ministers and interpreters of Nature,' it is the function of parents to see that their children habitually experience the true consequences of their conduct, the natural re-actions; neither rending them off, nor intensifying them, nor putting artificial consequences in their place? And therefore they cannot too anxiously avail themselves of this discipline of rational consequences,—this system of letting the penalty be inflicted by the laws of things." "Thus we see that this method of moral culture, by experience of the normal re-actions, which is the divinely-ordained method for infancy and for adult life, is equally applicable during the intermediate childhood and youth."—*Education*, pp. 178, 191.

† Culture demanded by Modern Life, p. 374.

‡ Bain's Mental Science, p. 406.

by the employment of appropriate means. Direct power over my volitions — I am conscious of none.”*

According to this system, man's freedom is just so much above that of the animal as his knowledge is greater. The necessity of Nature holds one as well as the other. If, in ignorance of her demands, either shall transgress, Madam Nature is inexorable in her discipline: retribution must come. Man has the longer tether; his possibilities are greater: there is no other difference. Your horse, it might be said, is under a necessity of going before your carriage. He is free, doubtless, to follow the rein, and, after a little experience, will find it wise to obey, and so avoid the natural re-action, your whip. Man, too, should learn and conform to all the rules of his mistress. But, unfortunately for him, he is ignorant, to large extent, of what he needs to know in order that he may not transgress: in fact, while necessity is upon him, and retribution for violated law certain, his freedom consists in his possibility of learning Nature's “invariable laws of succession and resemblance.”

The following would be a very fit expression for this theory of freedom: Our life is made up of three acts, — first, necessity; second, blindness; third, retribution. As long as the second act is blindness, the play is inevitable tragedy. Let that be changed to knowledge, and it becomes comedy. Thus, since man is free to bring himself into harmony with Nature's

* Mill's Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Phil., vol. ii. pp. 45, 46. It is worthy of remark, that, in respect to a proper moral freedom, rationalistic Pantheism strikes hands with Positivism, although it may not so closely circumscribe the field of knowledge as the latter. That freedom which is requisite to a true personal responsibility is excluded from both.

laws, his great work as man is to change the play from tragedy to comedy, — reason quite sufficient, it would seem, why the disciples of Positivism so earnestly advocate the study of Nature (caring little for any thing else), since it is by such knowledge only that the desired change can be effected.

Undeniably there is a phase of truth in this view, connected as we are with the world of Nature; but we cannot accept it as all the truth, as if we sustained no relation to any thing besides and above Nature, — what the Positivists would have us believe. Man's personal freedom and responsibility for character differ in kind, and not merely in degree, from any so-called freedom within the sphere of Nature. And of this your own moral consciousness is proof, affirming as it does both freedom and responsibility for character.

We have thus found that Positivism, in the first place, counts out that very practical relation of man to a personal God, affirmed by Christianity; and in the second place, though in order of time the same, fails to find for man a proper freedom in and by which to develop his responsibility. Let us now try a third position, as Balaam did when he would learn whether to bless or curse Israel. We shall thus more fully know Positivism in its relation to man's development and destiny, by viewing it independently from its several sides.

That one which still remains may be called its philosophic side. Nor yet is the view we are about to take independent of the preceding, or they of it: through this, indeed, we must pass to enter those prov-

inces of moral freedom and practical Christianity which we have thus far assumed to lie open to us. We must determine in this province whether or not our assumption is valid. Positivism is, in fact, however comprehensive it may claim to be, a system of sense-philosophy carried out, or being carried out, to its results.

Comte, as we have seen, discards as vain any attempt to search for "causes of phenomena, whether first or final," and shuts us up to facts. Bain makes truth "the same as precision, accuracy, certainty, in adjusting the means to the end;" while, of course, he discards intuitive truth. And John Stuart Mill in his philosophy belongs to the same school. It is very true, that some, like Spencer for example, may admit a dark background beyond phenomena; but this is so much darker than darkness itself, that, if any thing is written there, it is utterly illegible to us. He opposes science to religion, as the known to the unknown. God may exist; but, if so, he is this dark, impenetrable Unknown, becoming darker and darker the more we try to think of him. And surely one who says, not sees, that there is the same truth in Atheism and Pantheism as in Theism,* could not find in religion any truth that should legitimately concern man.

Now, as John Bunyan would say, we are here "at a point" with the Positivists. We take issue with them in behalf of a better philosophy in itself considered, and as demanded both by morality and by Christianity, — in behalf of a possible knowledge of that

* First Principles, p. 36.

which is above and beyond phenomena, and such a knowledge as can and does become for man in the highest degree practical, affecting his development here, and his destiny hereafter.

We need not controvert the position taken by the Positivists,—one that they would make fundamental, and apply in education,—that no knowledge concerns us except that which lies within our reach.* The important question is this, the rather, whether we are precluded from all knowledge except that which the Positivists allow to be within reach.

It must be admitted that those who would thus limit our possible knowledge seem to agree with some Christian Theists in their philosophy; at least, in their logic. It is, for instance, suggestive, that Spencer, indorsing Mansel's argument, is fond of quoting from him in proof that we cannot know the Infinite and First Cause. But when Mansel, after Hamilton, says, "It is our duty to think of God as personal, and it is our duty to think of him as infinite," Spencer demurs, and declares that this conclusion is not valid. From the assumed premises, we can neither affirm nor deny a personality; and, if we believe in one, our belief is groundless. How, in fact, can we believe that which is unknowable? The first principles of Positivism might say to Mr. Mansel, "Your reasoning belongs to the ripe age of manhood, but your theology to that of childhood. It is time to put away childish things for positive science." Why did not the Theist call to his aid a philosophy true to youth and manhood alike? Why should he rely mainly

* "The knowledge within our reach is the only knowledge that can be of service to us."—*Spencer's First Principles*, p. 86.

on his logic, and so little on intuitive truth? Otherwise he need not have left a point so important exposed to the successful attack of the Positivist.

Thanks to Hamilton and Mansel, or rather to their religious instincts, for giving back God to faith! No thanks to them for taking from us the possibility of knowing him; no thanks for their negative philosophy, that refuses us a knowledge of the most important objects of thought. No: it is our very birthright to know God; and this they cannot take away.

We know what is above and beyond phenomena. Let us hold in our thought this affirmation: it is the sword by which the heart of Positivism is to be pierced. We might well discard a personal God and moral freedom, if, in fact, the knowledge of that whose origin is supersensuous be impossible; for, in this case, we could have nothing to do with either. But we will not, for we need not, because of any acute logical reasoning, give up essential being, a personal God, immutable truth and morality, and say that we cannot know them as real. They are not less real than palpable facts in the world of sense, if we do not say, with Plato, that there can be no science of ever-changing phenomena, only of what is rational, and so unchangeable.

Indeed, while reasoning about Nature's objects, we constantly borrow (the Positivists themselves are constantly borrowing), from a higher source, axioms, regulative principles. For example, none of us can think, not even the Positivists, without time in which to think; nor can any thing exist without space in which to exist. But annihilate every sensible object, and destroy all succession in time: space and

time themselves are not annihilated, but still remain. We have both as real, not from sense, but from reason.

We have, again, the idea of cause, and that, too, very early, as something dynamic, not mechanical, — as that which is very different from invariable antecedent and consequent. Beyond all effects, let Scientists and Positivists generalize them *ad libitum*: reason demands and holds to a free cause, a will-power, that can originate; and, beyond all other causes, a free causality, a First Cause, without whom nothing could be, and who can fully comprehend Nature. From some source we assuredly have God, being, substance, causality; and then freedom, right, duty, obligation, — have we not these also?

They do not come from sense, or from any deduction from or generalization of phenomena. But we are not on that account to set them down as unreal. It is true, also, that we cannot seize upon them by means of a logical process, and for the significant reason that we have them at the start. Admit, assume, postulate, them from the outset, and all is consistent; deny them as first principles, and we find nothing at the end of our Nature's chain satisfactory.

It may be, it is, true, as just said, that sense cannot give these higher principles, and that logic cannot draw them from a syllogism, or a series of syllogisms. It may be, as it is, true, that the imagination cannot fashion them; but have we, on this account, occasion for alarm? Not at all; for this knowledge is not that which sense or imagination or logic or association, or all combined, can give. Reason, to which they truly belong, gives them at once, and affirms their reality; and this as wholes and unities, not as frac-

tional parts integrated. Our intellectual being is as veracious, trustworthy, in the higher sphere as in the lower. It is not to be treated as mendacious, false, when it affirms supersensuous realities. If it is, how, then, shall we rely upon it, even in the lower sphere of knowledge, through the senses, and as affirming an external world? Agree or disagree as we may with Pres. Hopkins in his theory of morals, we must agree with him when he says, "If our primitive ideas do not represent realities, and so furnish a safe basis for action, our nature is false, and all search after truth is hopeless." *

Let us here call to mind that the possibility of this higher knowledge was assumed throughout in what has gone before, and think how invalid were both morals and religion without it.

Let us say that virtue is rectitude of will: what could it avail, though man might be free to will, provided he could not know the rule of right by which to rectify his will? Deny the possibility of seeing and distinguishing between what is morally right and morally wrong, and we might well stop speaking of morality; for it would then be a term without real significance, or meaning, as in the system of Positivism, simply a conformity to Nature's laws.

Again: if we deny the possibility of a supersensuous and valid knowledge, on what would rest our Christian Theism, with its remedial system, the gospel of Christ? This, as we have seen and do know, makes prominent man's relation to a personal God, and this through his entire development and destiny here and

* Hopkins's Law of Love, &c., p. 45.

hereafter. But if we cannot know that God is, and what he is in his essential attributes, what, then, becomes of "God's conversableness with man," as John Howe would say, or man's with God? If we cannot, through the finite reason, know God, how, possibly, can we trust him, love him, obey him, or worship him?

But, for the sake of attestation in our own consciousness, let me, in all candor, ask this thinking audience, if, while traversing with me the field of man's direct relation to a personal God, the knowledge implied in that sphere seemed to you at all doubtful or inconsistent? Or, when speaking of man's freedom and responsibility, did the knowledge requisite thereto seem to you at all like a chaos of uncertainty, or any thing less than real? Why, then, should we find the doors shut against us when we would study our practical relation to a personal God, and seek to know our duty as morally responsible? In the name of reason let the question be asked, Why are we met with the blank assertion, that the doors cannot be opened, or, rather, that none were ever made, through which we can pass into those aerial regions? Why declare to us that such knowledge lies beyond our reach; that we can know only things on the earth, and that we in vain concern ourselves with any thing higher? * Nay, but, O Positivists!

* "The analysis of every possible hypothesis proves, not simply that no hypothesis is sufficient, but that no hypothesis is even thinkable; and thus the mystery which all religions recognize turns out to be a far more transcendent mystery than any of them suspect, — not a relative, but an absolute mystery." "If religion and science are to be reconciled, the basis of reconciliation must be this deepest, widest, and most certain of all facts, that the Power which the universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable." — *Spencer's First Principles*, p. 46.

if the truth of reason in finite minds must affirm itself not less than the truth of fact in the mind of Galileo, then, spite your denials, there will come spectres, like the ghost of Banquo, to your sensuous feasts, to push you from your stools, — spectres from those aerial regions which you so zealously ignore, that shall turn before your eyes into a mighty power of reality.

We have thus tested Positivism by a Christian theism, a Christian morality, and a Christian philosophy, and have found it wanting under each test. We will not regard our task as done, however, till we have turned our attention, so far as time will permit, to some of its actual results, and asked, in view of the whole, how the positive philosophy should be treated by us. This is of the greater practical importance, inasmuch as a vigorous attempt is now being made to reconstruct education on the basis of Positivism.

The previous consideration of the radical defects of the system renders it less necessary to speak, at any great length, of its manifestations. These thoroughly accord with what might be expected; and a brief mention of some of them will suffice as indices.

It is, first of all, a significant fact, that the advocates of Positivism care little for literature, language, history, less for philosophy, and least for theology. Why is this? Is it not because the best literature is pervaded by ideas, which, though not from sense, have hitherto had great power among men? Is it not because, in their language, the thoughts and interior life of men are embodied? Is it not because

history must afford, on the one hand, evidence of the abuse of man's freedom, and, on the other, intimations of a providential Ruler? Is it not because philosophy tries, with less or more of success, to solve the great problems of human existence? And is it not because theology, as Christian doctrine, not only confirms the reality of man's sin and guilt, but proposes to save him only by a divine and supernatural interposition? The best reason for the fact above alluded to must be found in the character of the things excluded. For why should Positivism, being what it is, allow its disciples to wander off from the uniform laws of Nature, through ideas and a conviction of responsibility, to a personal God? Why suffer them, through a sense of guilt and bondage under sin, to look for that aid which Nature, when all her laws are known, cannot give? Metaphysics and theology have had their day; but what have they, or the history and literature which would propagate them, to do with the "culture demanded by modern life"? The Positivist is indignant at the obtrusion of any thing not according to, or that cannot be explained by, "the invariable laws of succession and resemblance." *

And please note the treatment which sacred things, especially the Sacred Scriptures, are to receive from the Scientists. Matthew Arnold, in his graceful style, as well as any one can tell us. He may not speak

* Is it well understood that the demand for a change in our college curriculum is mainly in the interest of the "positive philosophy," which says, through Comte, that "our European" and American "education, still essentially theological, metaphysical, and literary, must be superseded by a positive training conformable to our time and needs"?—*Pos. Phil.*, p. 84.

in the name, but he does in the very spirit, of Positivism, when, asking that God may be a synonyme for that universal order in which the religious and the scientific sense may meet, he says, "The scientific sense calls upon St. Paul to produce the facts by which he verifies what he says; and, if he cannot produce them, it treats both St. Paul's assertion and Calvinism's assertion after him as of no real consequence." And again: "The more an alleged revelation seems to contain precious and striking things, the more will science be inclined to doubt the correctness of any deduction which draws from it, within the sphere of those things, a conception which rationally is not satisfying." And, as the connection shows, "rationally" here means in the scientific sense.*

If the Bible is crowded out of our schools, an unwillingness to receive it as the authoritative standard of truth and the Christianity which it teaches as from God,—this, more than every thing else, will do it. Not Infidelity alone, which hates the word of God; nor Romanism alone, which fears it; nor both united; but with the aid of Positivism, which makes every thing of natural science, because it believes in nothing else,—they may, in this Christian land, succeed.

The truth requires us to say, again, that modern Positivism is materialistic. There may be careful study of Nature that does not tend to this, although Lord Bacon thinks superficial study does tend to materialism; but that study of natural science which

* See Matthew Arnold's Essay on St. Paul in Every Saturday.

is bounded and interpreted wholly by a sense-philosophy, as in the system before us, leads by a direct road to materialism.

Listen for proof to Prof. Youmans: "When we begin to deal with the problem of mental discipline, metaphysics no longer avail. It is the organism with which we have to deal." "The bodily organism is in reality the first and fundamental thing to be considered." * And, "in reaching a knowledge of mind and character through the study of the corporeal system, there has been laid the foundation of that science of human nature, the completion of which will constitute the next and highest phase in the progress of man." † Prof. Bain has constructed a "mental science" on the plan of reaching the mind through the muscles, the nervous system, and the brain; and, by the help of Mill's associational theory, Darwin's development theory, and Huxley's evolutionism, the assumption seems not far distant of one substance, and that substance matter. By a long process of evolution and transformation, matter becomes so attenuated as at last to exhibit mental phenomena! — and mind, by a reverse process, should, of course, reduce itself to matter! I do not here enter on an argument to prove that mind is not nerve-force; that spirit is not matter; that God is not the universe, but different in essence from it: I am speaking of the materialism of the positive philosophy. ‡

* Culture demanded by Modern Life, pp. 13, 15. † Ibid., p. 377.

‡ "At the farthest remove from the scriptural view," says Fairbairn, "stand the advocates of materialism, — those who would merge mind and matter ultimately into one mass; who would trace all mental phenomena to sensations, and account for every thing that takes place by means of the affinities, combinations, and inherent properties of matter. In such a phi-

Still another feature of the system being developed must not be unnoticed. I do not mean its pride, or, more truthfully, its deification of the human intellect, to which a passing notice might well be called (for of that "modesty of true science," of which Chalmers in the second of his "Astronomical Discourses" speaks, both master and disciples are wholly innocent); but I mean, rather, the religious side of Positivism. It may be quite illogical that it should be so; but the religious impulses, too strong to be utterly suppressed in the soul of man, make it necessary; and this system, after ignoring theology and Christianity, must have grafted on to it, for it is no proper growth out of it, a substitute for religion.

Shall I set forth Comte, — strong and manly in his proper sphere of fact and generalization, — claiming for woman an immortality which results from a remembrance and subjective adoration of her by the living, and making her thus his presiding genius or goddess,

losophy, there is room for law only in the physical sense, and for such progress of civilization as may arise from a more perfect acquaintance therewith, and a more skilful use or adaptation of it to the employments and purposes of life. The personality of God as a living, eternal Spirit, cannot be entertained; and, of course, responsibility in the higher sense, as involving subjection to moral government and the establishment of a divine moral order, can have no place. For mind is but a species of cerebral development; thought or desire, but an action of the brain; man himself, but the most perfectly developed form of organic being, the highest type in the scale of Nature's ascending series of productions, whose part is fulfilled in doing what is fitted to secure a healthful organization, and provide for himself the best conditions possible of social order and earthly well-being. But to say nothing of the scheme in other respects, looking at it simply with reference to the religion and morality of the Bible, it plainly ignores the foundation on which they may be said to rest; namely, those moral elements in man's constitution, or the phenomena of conscience, which are just as real as those belonging to the physical world, and in their nature immensely more important." — *Fairbairn's Revelation of Law in Scripture*, pp. 20, 21.

and say that in this he fitly represents the tendency of his system? This would seem too much like a caricature: it were more honorable to attribute Comte's later development to aberration of mind.* And yet this philosophy, which denies the supernatural, and smothers original instinct, is to-day attempting to construct a religion — well named a “religion of the future,” for it can never be of present service — “in which those inherent tendencies of the mind and soul which produced Fetichism, Anthropomorphism, Polytheism, Monotheism, Spiritualism, Idealism, Positivism,” — and, of course, all other *isms* except Christianity and revealed religion, — “will find their co-ordinate expression.”† This renders it, after all, not very inconsistent to think of Comte — making female excellence his *grand-être*, and sentimentally paying homage to her image — as a type and illustration of the darkening, degrading influence of a system which shuts out the light of reason, and refuses to warm and satisfy the soul by a supernatural love and reverence. “If the light in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

It is not necessary to say more of the manifestations of Positivism. The practical working of the system is only what might be anticipated when we fully appreciate its radical defects, and understand that it claims to do for man, nevertheless, all that his development requires. How could a system without a personal God, without a moral freedom, without a spiritual philosophy, do better?

* For some account of Comte's religious development, see James Martineau's essay on Comte's Life and Philosophy.

† S. Baring Gould on the Origin and Development of Religious Belief.

We may then pass to our other practical inquiry: "How should the positive philosophy be treated by us?" In passing to it, I observe, that we are not to regard Positivism as a powerless opponent of Christianity, or one to be disregarded, although it may be, as has been shown, radically defective. Its devotion to Nature is its strong side; and, under this, it manages to hide from the less discerning its defects. Moreover, in ignoring the supernatural, it falls in with, as well as helps to promote, a strong popular as well as scientific tendency of our times. Some years since, James Martineau, while speaking of Spencer, expressed his belief that his opposition of science to theology might be regarded as the prevailing sentiment of scientific men, and that the tendency for some time to come would gain force against all resistance. The opinion of this able critic is being but too fully realized.*

It may be also said of this system, that its claims, vigorously advocated as they are, make it quite necessary for us to stand firmly on the right side of the dividing-line between error and truth; nor is it an occasion of regret — of rejoicing, rather — that we must determine whether, indeed, we do stand at all, and where.

But I hasten to say, and this in view of our whole discussion, that, on the one hand, we should regard and treat Positivism as defective, and not able to do for man what he needs, or to develop his full manhood.

Though not in my plan to speak of a Christless

* First volume of *Philosophical and Theological Essays*, p. 174 (Essay on Science, Nescience, and Faith).

civilization as a result of Positivism, it is, nevertheless, pertinent to ask, by way of illustration, "Can Positivism furnish us the men who can, in turn, give us a Christian civilization?" It would be only re-affirming what has been here admitted for two hundred and fifty years, were I to suggest that a "Mayflower" would never have landed on these shores if our ancestors had not been trained in an eminently "theological" age (and in one a little "metaphysical" withal), whereby they became thoroughly pervaded by the reality of Christian truth. It is to the men of that period, fashioned in character and Christian manhood by the powerful influence of the Protestant Reformation, which still earlier Christian men, Knox, Calvin, Luther, and others, maintained as doctrine essential for all,—to these men, whom Positivism could not bring forth,—to these men, I repeat, instrumentally and under God, we owe our present Christian civilization. This fact is one that the clear light of history compels us to recognize, let it confirm or annihilate our favorite theory as it may.

Of like force is our illustration when we think how individual men have been formed by just those influences most decried and set at nought by the Positivists. John Milton, for example, could not have been what he was, William Shakspeare could not have lived beyond his own age, but for that spiritual philosophy and that Christian Theism, in the belief of which they were educated, and which gave to their thought its imperishable element. "Macbeth" were nothing without its moral element. "Paradise Lost" is thoroughly the product of religious thought. Go beyond the rise of Protestantism to Dante, then be-

yond the rise of Christianity to Homer, and think of those two men, Dante and Homer, cut and moulded according to the fashion of Positivism! Surely their poems then could not have been immortal: it is more probable they would not have been at all. Neither Cicero nor Demosthenes, trained only under the influence of thought furnished by the "positive science," could have spoken with power such as to be acknowledged to this day "prince of orators." And yet another, — poet, orator, teacher, all in one; philosopher, moralist, theologian, too, all in one, but with not much of that study held to be adequate for modern life, — if you can, think of Plato stripped of his higher morality, stripped of his philosophic ideas. You know that thus, weaker than Samson shorn, he could have thought nothing, taught nothing, which would have lived to the first year of the Christian era.

Verily, men have developed a power wide and enduring, according as they themselves have been developed by ideas of reason and God. Proof sufficient is thus afforded, that, if we would have men who shall appreciate human life and fulfil their mission here, their minds must be fed on something quite different from facts and phenomena: we must give them history and language and philosophy, a personal God above, and a genuine freedom within. To develop in them a true humanity, we must give them — not secondarily, but primarily — humanizing studies; to develop and rightly direct their full manhood, we must take them beyond the region of sense, and into contact with supernatural and life-giving realities.

Thus, on the one hand, we are to treat Positivism as radically defective, — not able to develop man truly,

and in view of his high destiny: on the other hand, we are not so much to contend with the positive philosophy on its own low plane, as to affirm fully, boldly, positively, the higher truth, which it sets at nought. I say "positively," because to the higher truth, which is its own evidence, the term "positive" properly belongs, and not to the phenomenal, which has assumed it without right, in like manner as it borrows from that which is above it light by which to see, without giving credit therefor. The method of what is called "Positivism" is negative: that of the higher truth is positive. It denies: let us affirm.

But, if thoroughness of observation is conceded to that, shall it be denied to a Christian study of Nature? Were Newton and Kepler, who in their study of the heavens felt both humbled and ennobled by thinking God's thoughts after him, any worse astronomers because of their religious devotion? Have Hugh Miller, J. Pye Smith, Guyot, Silliman, and Dana shown themselves inferior students of natural science because of having their characters moulded by a belief in Christianity? Surely all that is valuable in Positivism can be retained in a Christian philosophy: nay, more, it may appear at length that Positivism is inadequate even in its own sphere, for want of a proper method, which Bacon clearly saw could not be had without rational insight.*

* "He who has learned the cause of a particular nature in particular subjects only has acquired but an imperfect knowledge. He who has only learned the efficient and material cause may, perhaps, arrive at some new discoveries in matters of simpler nature, and prepared for the purpose, but does not stir the limits of things which are much more deeply rooted; whilst he who is acquainted with forms" (elsewhere Bacon speaks of "formal and final" causes as belonging to "metaphysic," not "physic," and declares

And would it not appear quite evident, that, to successfully counterwork this so-called philosophy, we must have a more adequate, more satisfying philosophy? No alternative, in fact, is left us. Morality demands it; Christianity demands it; and the truth as philosophy demands that we lay our foundations deep and sure.

If the materialistic Atheism of the nineteenth century needs as antidote an "Intellectual System of the Universe" like that of Cudworth two hundred years ago, then let us have one truly adapted to our time and needs. If the thinkers of the seventeenth century can teach a philosophy true to religion, — as Ellicott thinks they must teach us theology, — then let us be willing to learn of them. But the same essential truths of man and God need in our day to take other forms also. A philosophy that treats ideas and intuitions as realities, and that finds their validity in the divine reason, — why should it not be uttered by the lips of orators, or be sung by poets "smit with the love of sacred song"? It is to be affirmed

"forms of all other parts of knowledge the worthiest to be sought"), — "whilst he who is acquainted with forms comprehends the unity of Nature in substances apparently the most distinct from each other. He can disclose and bring forward, therefore (if it has never yet been done), things which neither the vicissitudes of Nature, nor the industry of experiment, nor chance itself, would ever have brought about, and which would forever have escaped man's thoughts. From the discovery of forms, then, result genuine theory and free practice." — *Novum Organon*, book ii. aph. 3.

How different the attitude of this great mind towards sacred and divine things from that of our modern Positivists is indicated by his Student's Prayer, in which he says, "This also we humbly beg, that human things may not prejudice such as are divine; neither that from the unlocking of the gates of sense, and the kindling of a greater natural light, any thing of incredulity or of intellectual night arise in our minds towards the divine mysteries."

in our pulpits by the ministers of a supernatural revelation; and it should pervade our literature. This, most surely, shall put to silence the blustering Goliath of Positivism and Natural Science. This, too, more effectually than a majority vote, shall cause the Bible to be retained in our schools; for it will beget and preserve in the community at large such a sentiment in favor of the Word of God as the guide of the young, that no Board of Education would think of violating it.

Not more reasoning from inadequate premises, and on the horizontal plane of logical controversy, and which accomplishes but little, is desirable; but more of the direct affirmation of truth, — the divine method, and which accomplishes more than we think, — the positive affirmation of that truth, which, coming to man in its own right, does most to fashion him for his high destiny, — of this we are in great need at this present time. The preparation for it, let us understand, is a clear beholding and a full confidence in the truth.

Positivism lives what life it has by the aid of borrowed light. Let the true light of reason and that of the cross blend, — as at length they must and will blend, — and the fitful light of positive science will go out beneath the brightness. Let us strengthen ourselves in truth, and the God of truth; and, with both on our side, we shall be permitted to see this and other forms of error vanquished, and the defeat turned to the account of that Christianity and that Christian philosophy which fully responds to the deep, imperishable wants of the human soul.

III.

THE UNCERTAINTIES OF NATURAL AND OF RELIGIOUS SCIENCE,

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SCIENCE is systematized knowledge. There may be knowledge without science ; but there can be no science without knowledge. The first condition of science is, that there be known facts. Conjecture and assumption have their place, but not until facts are discovered, of which they serve as a preliminary explanation. The knowledge of the facts does not become science, in the full sense of the term, until conjecture and assumption have given place to certainty respecting the relations and the causes of the facts to be explained. A scientific man may speculate ; but his speculation is not science. It may lead him to science, but still it is not science ; for it may also lead him away from science.

This is all very simple, and will doubtless meet with ready assent from all ; but there are involved herein certain principles and suggestions of far-reaching importance.

1. One of these principles is, that it is the province of science to explain, not some facts, but all facts. Whatever can be known is a proper subject of scien-

tific inquiry. No one questions this. Why, then, should it have been allowed to happen that the term "science" has in point of fact come to be used pre-eminently of the natural sciences; whereas, when other sciences are to be designated, a specific title must be used? Thus we speak, on the one hand, of the sciences of botany, of geology, of astronomy, of chemistry, of mineralogy, of physiology, of physics, and the like; and, on the other hand, of the sciences of language, of the mind, of ethics, of history, and of religion. But, if a man speaks of science collectively, he is understood, as a general rule, unless he explains himself, to exclude the latter class of sciences entirely, and to mean simply the natural sciences. Even the term "natural science," or (to use a more correct expression) "science of Nature," is too comprehensive for the thing meant to be described by it: it should be rather called the "science of matter." But this inaccuracy is slight, compared with the other, which, so long as it is allowed to pass current without notice or protest, becomes, whether designedly or not, a means of casting discredit on those sciences which relate to any thing besides the mere properties of matter. It is not enough to say that this is only a question of usage. "Words are things." If the natural sciences are generally spoken of as if they only were sciences, a popular impression is produced that this is the fact. Hence those who hold (and there are doubtless few who do not) that there are other sciences than the so-called natural sciences are doing themselves and the cause of truth a positive injury whenever they use the term "science" in this narrow sense. That this usage arises from no inher-

ent necessity of the case is shown by the fact, that, e.g., in German the corresponding word, *Wissenschaft*, is not used in this limited sense. Usage may be law; but it is often tyrannical law, resistance to which is a duty. Those, therefore, who speak of "science and religion" as if there were or might be an antagonism between them, make an unworthy concession, and indeed do hardly less than stultify themselves, if they also believe that there is such a thing as the science *of* religion, — a science co-ordinate with every other science. Theology is the science of the facts of religion. Now, no fact, or department of facts, can contradict any other fact, or department of facts. Still less can we with propriety speak of a science, i.e., the philosophical *explanation* of one set of facts, as conflicting with the other set of *facts*. We might as well speak of a conflict between botany and the planet Jupiter, or between comparative philology and the execution of Charles I.

2. Another principle involved in our opening remarks is, that it is the province of science to explain facts, not to explain away facts. Its office is positive, not negative. Patient investigation and classification of actual phenomena and events — this is the indispensable condition of all science. The deduction of general laws and principles underlying the phenomena is a secondary matter. This deduction is indeed the goal of science; but it can never be said to be positively attained, until all the facts to be referred to these laws are ascertained. To be unwilling to believe in the existence of a phenomenon or in the occurrence of an event, despite all evidence for it, is therefore eminently unscientific. Theories are useful;

but, when a man becomes so wedded to a theory that he resolutely shuts his eyes to every fact which contradicts it, he ceases to be a man of science: he is a dogmatist. He who refuses even to weigh the evidence for the fact that animals lived on this globe more than six thousand years ago may be acting consistently with his theory of creation: but he is not a lover of truth; he has not a scientific mind. So, when a man says, as a recent writer has said, "Every science assumes that the laws of Nature . . . are never for a moment suspended; . . . an apparent miracle worked before our very eyes will never again carry conviction to an educated man," — when a man makes this his principle, he avows that he adheres to a theory so tenaciously that no fact can make him give it up, even though the fact occur before his very eyes. In other words, his aim is no longer to explain facts by his theory, but to make facts correspond to his theory. He is therefore not a scientific man, but a dogmatist.

Science, as such, denies nothing, except in so far as established facts are absolutely irreconcilable with alleged facts. It makes no denials except through affirmations. It does not deny even theories, unless it has better theories to substitute for them, or unless facts are found which the theories are incompetent to explain.

3. Science being the systematized knowledge of facts, it follows, further, that no particular department of science can be perfect, until all the facts belonging to it are perfectly known. However complete any system may seem to be, however certain its principles, it is yet liable to be overturned by the discovery of a

single fact for which the system has no place. The probability of any such overturn may be ever so small ; yet the possibility always exists. But it is not merely ignorance of bare facts which invests a science with a certain degree of imperfection : the relations of all the facts need to be perfectly known in order to make the science absolutely complete. Facts must be known in their causes and consequences, else they are not truly known. In short, the condition of perfect science is omniscience.

This being so, it follows that every science, in consequence of the limitations of human knowledge, must be attended with a greater or less degree of uncertainty, — uncertainty in regard to particular facts, and uncertainty in regard to general principles. There must be an overwhelming presumption, that, in this respect, every science, whatever may be the department of knowledge which it embraces, is analogous to every other. It therefore does not become the adherents of any one science to make these uncertainties a matter of reproach against other sciences. The weak points in a system may indeed be properly exposed ; the various sciences may help one another : for though in many relations distinct, yet they are all interwoven together. “ Truth is catholic, and Nature one.” It is the privilege of each science to borrow the results of every other ; but it is the privilege of no science to interfere with the development, or attack the foundations, of any other.

The antagonism which exists between certain naturalists and certain theologians could not have arisen without a disregard of these truths. It would be useless to try to distribute the blame. No candid

man can fail to see that there has been fault on both sides. When theologians stubbornly refuse to believe in what natural science has demonstrated, because some traditional notion of theirs seems thereby to be contradicted ; when naturalists, on the strength of a hasty induction, pronounce some theological dogma, or even a whole theological system, to be overthrown, — we cannot but detect in either case an unworthy animus. It is not thus that the cause of truth is advanced.

Accordingly, in considering the Uncertainties of Natural and of Religious Science, my object is, not to set up one of these departments of science as hostile to the other, but to illustrate the resemblance between them in this particular, with a view to certain practical lessons to be derived from this resemblance. If special stress is laid upon the uncertainties of the natural sciences, it will be only because the claim of superior exactness is often urged for them as contrasted with the alleged vagueness of theology. This vagueness is often conceived to be so radical as to stamp all religious science as impossible, and to prove all religion to be a mere product of fancy. It will be the object of the following analogies to exhibit the injustice of this notion.

I. It is said that uncertainty attends the very attempt to define the meaning of religion. What is religion? Is it belief, or feeling, or action? Is it worship, or service? Does it necessarily involve the conception of a God, or not? If it does, is it a sense of dependence on him, or a sense of obligation to him? Moreover, if religion does always involve

the notion of a Deity, can it be shown that the Deity is any thing but a notion? Do not the various attempts to prove the existence of God show that there is some ground to doubt his existence? Is it not often confessed by theologians that none of these demonstrations are satisfactory, and that we must ultimately look for the evidence in the immediate intuitions of the soul? And is not this almost equivalent to a confession that every man is the author of his own God?

Let it be granted that absolute precision in the definition of religion, and absolute uniformity in the conception of God, and absolute conclusiveness in the proof of the existence of God, are far from being attained, if not far from being attainable. What then? Is all religion, therefore, a chimera? If so, then, treated in the same manner, how much better off are the physical sciences themselves? What is matter, the various forms and phenomena of which they deal with? Is it that which occupies space? But this is not assented to by all philosophers. And, even though true, how little does this definition tell us of the nature of matter! Moreover, the definition depends for its meaning upon our conception of space. Now this, according to many philosophers, is nothing but a form of thought. And what is to be understood by matter's filling a form of thought? Or, if space is more than a condition of thought, what is it? It cannot be called a thing: that would identify it either with matter or with mind, neither of which any one believes it to be. If it is called extension, we come back to the same difficulty; for how can we conceive of extension, except

as we conceive of something as extended? We might as well attempt to conceive of attraction as a reality, without any thing that attracts or is attracted. But if space is thought as something extended, then our definition is ruined; for we should be defining matter as an extended thing which occupies an extended thing. Or shall we define matter as that which is perceivable by the senses? But, according to some, the senses are only properties of matter; and then matter would be defined as that which is perceived by matter, — which is no definition at all. Or, if the senses are conceived as the organs of the mind, then the definition simply amounts to this: that matter is something of which the mind receives an impression as being different from itself. We are thus reduced to the merely negative definition: matter is not mind. According to many, this is the best definition possible. The professor who answered his daughter's question, "What is mind?" by the laconic answer, "No matter," and the other question, "What is matter?" by the answer, "Never mind," is generally held to have been as wise as he was witty.

If, however, we attempt to define matter by defining its qualities, we are no better off. Call matter that which has color, or hardness, or divisibility, or solidity; and what have you done? You have simply predicated of matter certain properties, which are either mere conceptions of the mind, or else can be conceived as belonging to something objective only as we first conceive the objective thing to be existent. In other words, either we think of the matter before we do of the quality, and therefore matter is not defined

to our thought by the definition of the quality: or else we think of the quality before we do of the thing to which it belongs; in which case there is no need of thinking of the thing at all, or, at least, the thing is constituted by the quality, is identical with it, — which is the same as to say that it itself is nothing at all; and we are brought to the Hegelian principle, that Nothing and Being are the same. Or shall we say that matter is not a substance characterized by qualities, but is nothing but pure force? Well, this is affirmed by many; but, in the minds of many others, almost the opposite is the truth. Inertia, the absence of force, seems to them rather the essential characteristic of matter; and the force which it exhibits is to them evidence of a mind which is at work upon it. But, again, there are others who deny all distinction between mind and matter. Either, as idealists, they hold mind to be the only real existence, and matter to be a phenomenon of mind; or, as materialists, they hold mind to be a modification of matter. It is not pertinent to our present purpose to criticise these various views: it is enough to mention the simple fact, that the attempt merely to define what the thing is with which the natural sciences have to deal involves us in inextricable difficulties. There is no definition which is not inadequate, or does not assume a knowledge of the thing to be defined. The highest authorities are divided on the question what the thing is, and, indeed, on the question whether the thing exists at all.

Suppose, now, an enemy of the physical sciences should conclude that, inasmuch as the greatest vagueness prevails respecting the nature, and even, in many

minds, the gravest doubt respecting the reality, of what these sciences make it their object to discuss, therefore these sciences are utterly without foundation; that none of the conclusions in them can be relied on as certain; that all the elaborate systems which have been built up may prove to be nothing but mere dreams: we should say, that, plausible as his reasoning may seem, it is yet fallacious. In spite of such objections, we should continue to believe that there is a material world; that its laws and properties may be ascertained; that much substantial truth concerning it has already been evolved, and that much more may yet be evolved, by the patient investigations of the student of Nature.

If this reply is sufficient, why should not the same reply be sufficient when made to the objection against the reality of religion or the existence of a God? What greater diversity of opinion can exist respecting the essence of religion or the nature of God, than exists respecting the essence of matter? what greater difficulty in proving the existence of God, than in proving the existence of matter? If uncertainty — the absence of an absolutely exhaustive definition or irrefragable demonstration — shall be allowed to cast ominous conjecture on the reality or the validity of religious beliefs and feelings, then the same uncertainty puts its withering touch on all the sciences of Nature; and the logical result is universal scepticism.

There is no science which does not begin with assumptions. Even in mathematics, we have axioms which elude all demonstration; and theology, like every other science, must have its postulates. Its province is not to create religion, or even to prove the

existence of religion: it simply *takes* religion as an undeniable, existent *fact*, and attempts to find the science of it. Even if all such attempts had hitherto been failures, the fact, still remaining, would challenge us to renew the effort.

II. But let us come to something more specific. One of the problems of theology is the beginning of moral agency, and, as closely connected with this, the origin of moral evil. It assumes that all rational beings are responsible to God; and that many, if not the greater part, of them have proved false to their obligations. It generally assumes that the human race, as a whole, has apostatized from God; that every member of it has wilfully violated a divine law. And yet, when theologians come to explain this uniformity, they either trace all sin back to one man, the father of the race, from whom sinfulness flows as a taint through all his descendants; or else they have to assume that there is directly implanted in every child a sinful germ, as sure to develop into actual transgression, as a seed, when sown, is to grow into a plant.

But, the objection presents itself, how disproportionate the cause to the effect! Can it be that a character of positive guiltiness, such as every adult man is supposed to have contracted, is to be traced to, and is made certain by, the first moral act which he put forth in his infancy? That beginning of moral agency lies beyond our search, if we examine others; and beyond our recollection, if we examine ourselves. And, whatever it was, it was the act of an infant, so limited in knowledge of duty and in sense of moral obligation, that its action seems hardly distinguishable from

that of the irresponsible beast. By what right can we ascribe to it such a tremendous efficacy? Or, if we go farther back, we do not free ourselves from difficulty. How can the sin of the first man account for that of all others? Does not such a theory either exculpate all his descendants from real guilt, or else prove that to be a most unjust moral government, which allows the sin of one man, by a moral necessity, to infect the whole race? And, if we attempt to understand how the first man could have sinned, we are none the less in the dark. If we ascribe the fall to a temptation from a fallen angel, we only remove the difficulty one step back. How could any holy being sin? How can we comprehend the beginning of moral evil? We may as well confess that we cannot comprehend it. The question introduces us to one of the deep uncertainties of theology.

But shall we therefore conclude that the doctrine of sin in general is involved in the same uncertainty? Shall we say, the fact of sin, as it is manifested now in living men, if it is a fact, must be somehow connected with the original act of sin, and therefore all the uncertainty which belongs to that belongs also to this? Shall we conclude that no such weighty results can have grown out of an accidental or a solitary act, and that sin is no such abnormal thing as men have been wont to call it, but is only part of a great necessary evolution going on in the universe of intelligent beings?

If this is correct reasoning, then it will be equally correct when applied to an analogous case in natural science. What can it say respecting the origin of the material world? It is now in existence, we will as-

sume ; but when and how did it come into existence ? Was it created out of nothing ? But, according to many, such a creation is inconceivable. And, whether conceivable or not, creation is an act of which natural science, as such, can know nothing. No induction of facts leads us to assume it ; none of the phenomena of matter point to it ; and, if we accept it as a dictum of theology or metaphysics, still it explains nothing. To say that matter was created is only another way of merely saying that it had an origin. But let the assumption stand ; let the naturalist have the benefit of this metaphysical dogma. Still he is troubled by such questions as these : Was this creation a necessary act ? Was the production of the material world an essential part of an evolution of the divine nature ? If so, and if God is eternal, then the creation cannot be conceived as taking place at any definite past time ; for however long ago that time may have been, yet an eternity must be conceived to have preceded it, and any development of the divine essence taking place by necessity must have taken place before any time that can be assigned as the time of creation. There is, logically, no escape on this theory from the doctrine of an eternal creation. Was creation, then, a voluntary act on God's part ? Then still the question presses itself upon us, Did it take place at a definite past time ? and, if so, why not sooner ? Was it an arbitrary thing with God to let an eternity pass with no material universe on which to exercise his power and care ? If not under a physical necessity to create, was he not under a moral obligation to do so ? If in creation he displayed his glory, if it was a desirable thing that

he should fill the infinity of space with stellar and planetary worlds, and people them with intelligent beings capable of glorifying him, then ought he not to have done it? And if he ought to have done it at all, then ought he not to have done it as early as possible? Thus we are seemingly driven again to the assumption that the creation must have been co-eternal with God. If, on the other hand, we deny the theory of creation entirely, as the great majority of pagan philosophers have done, and as many besides them also do, then we are still more evidently forced to assume that the universe of matter is eternal. If there is no creative power able to bring matter into existence, then of course, unless matter is eternal, it must be assumed to have brought itself into existence, — which is a simple absurdity. We seem, therefore, every way to be driven to assume that the material world is eternal. But a closer consideration shows that this assumption is involved in as great difficulty as the opposite. For the universe is not a stagnant one. Mighty forces are all the time operating in it. It is undergoing a process of development. The stages of development through which this earth has passed can with greater or less precision be traced by the geologist. If, now, the universe of matter has existed eternally, acted on by no intelligence from without, developed by an inherent necessity of development, then the present stage of development must have been reached an eternity ago. Go back as far as you will ; go till you find the earth in its most primitive, its most chaotic state ; go till you reach the point where the development began : yet an eternity still lies behind ; and you must as-

sume that the universe, though possessed of an inherent, necessary tendency to evolve itself into the various forms through which it has passed and is yet to pass, nevertheless lay dormant an eternity long, and then at length suddenly began its career of development. But this is nothing less than a contradiction of the theory itself with which we start. Truly, whichever way we turn in trying to solve the problem, we find ourselves "in wandering mazes lost."

But if we leave this phase of the problem, and attempt merely to trace back the history of the universe, not to its origin, but to an indefinite past, we do not stand on much firmer ground. The only scientific attempt in this direction which we need notice is the Nebular theory, propounded by La Place, and held by many eminent astronomers to be the most probable explanation of the process by which the heavenly bodies came to assume their present form and motions. According to this theory, the solar system once existed in the form of an attenuated, cloudy, heated mass of matter, of which the sun was the centre, and which extended to the outer limit of what is now our planetary system. The sun revolved on its axis, and all of its nebulous atmosphere revolving around or with it was cooled and condensed; and, as the condensation continued, the outer part was thrown off in the form of a ring or zone. Then the same process took place with the remainder. Each ring continued to cool and contract, until the whole was condensed into a planet, except that in some cases a part of it took the form of moons revolving around the planet. This theory is advocated as best satisfying all the conditions of the case. It is thought

to be favored, if not demonstrated, by such facts as these: the heated condition of the interior of the earth; the fact that the planets and satellites rotate and revolve in one direction; the peculiar phenomenon of the rings of Saturn; the gaseous state of the comets; the Zodiacal light, judged by many to be a vaporous ring of matter extremely attenuated, and revolving around the sun between the orbits of Venus and Mars; also, and especially, the appearance presented by certain nebulæ, of which the different appearances correspond to the different appearances through which our system passed according to the Nebular theory. But, plausible as the theory is, it cannot claim to be established beyond serious doubt. Many nebulæ, which once were supposed to be strictly such, have been by the aid of more powerful telescopes resolved into groups of stars; and this lends probability to the opinion that others might be resolved in the same manner, were it not for their immense distance from us. Moreover, the theory gives no explanation of the fact of the original, central rotation on which the whole process is supposed to have depended. For this, we must have recourse to an external, intelligent force; and if so, then any other phenomenon can as easily be accounted for in the same manner. More positively opposed to the theory is the fact (probable, if not established) that the moons of the planet Uranus revolve in a different direction from that of all the other planets and satellites. The theory also does not account for the direction of the orbits of the comets, nor for their great eccentricity. Furthermore, if every solar system has passed or is passing through such a process, we should

expect to be able to see a proportionately larger number of these systems in the earlier nebulous state; whereas, in point of fact, they are comparatively rare. At the best, it cannot be claimed for the Nebular theory that it is any thing more than a theory. So far as the observation of facts leads us, we are authorized only to assert the reality of the present facts. The planetary and stellar bodies are seen in their condensed form, moving according to an almost invariable regularity. If this regularity, this unvarying sameness, leads us to expect and to prophesy its future continuance, then it may also furnish a reason for inferring its past continuance. But if the theory is resorted to because it is assumed that the solar system *must* have gone through a process of development before attaining its present state, then we come again to this dilemma: Either matter is uncreated and eternal, possessing an inherent and necessary tendency to pass through the forms of development which have culminated in our present solar systems, — in which case the full development ought to have taken place an eternity ago; or matter was created from nothing by an act of divine power, — in which case the notion of development has at *that* point to be abandoned, and the question presents itself, whether it is metaphysically any easier to conceive of the creation of matter in a nebulous state than it is to conceive of the creation of matter in a planetary state. The Nebular theory, therefore, plausible as it is, is invested with grave difficulties. Whether true or not, it is not yet proved to be true. It is confessedly as yet only a theory: it is one of the uncertainties of natural science.

Yet these systems of worlds have had a history: their present condition is indissolubly connected with their past condition. Suppose, now, some sceptic should arise and say, that, unless he can be made to understand how the present condition of the universe is connected with its past, he will hold his judgment in suspense as to the present fact; suppose that he should attempt, on the ground of the admitted inability of astronomers to explain conclusively the genesis of the heavenly bodies, to cast discredit on all their sublime discoveries and conclusions, — we should say that a man with a mind so perverted is not fit to hear himself convinced. And yet would not his reasoning be as reasonable as that of one, who, because he cannot be made to see any cause adequate to account for the apparently universal and profound moral depravity of men, should come to the conclusion that the depravity is only apparent, should reject the conclusions of the wisest and best of men, and violently suppress the convictions of his moral sense respecting the obvious and even obtrusive facts of every-day life? Ought he not, rather, to reflect that those baffling questions respecting the origin of evil, the fall of angels, the fall of Adam, the beginning of moral agency, would never have been suggested, had it not been for the evident *fact* of the immense and universal moral evil now existing? Would men ever have been *troubled* by these questions, if sin had not been felt to be something abnormal, unnecessary, monstrous?

III. So, if, instead of looking at the past, we look at the future, we find another parallel between reli-

gious and natural science. What is to be the issue of this life of ours? The question of the beginning of moral agency and of sin aside, what is to be the end of it? In what is the moral system to culminate? What is to be the course of development in the future life? Is that life to be a mere repetition of this, or is it to be a state of retribution? Is it to be a fixed state, or is it to be succeeded by others in infinite succession? How is it that, in spite of the alleged revelations on this subject, such uncertainty still hangs over it that men resort to all manner of theories, — of existence in a disembodied state, of a spiritual body received after an intermediate state, of a spiritual body received immediately after death, of metempsychosis, of absorption into Deity, of the ultimate annihilation of the wicked, of the eternal punishment of the wicked, of probation ending at death, of probation ending at the time of the general judgment; while multitudes discard the notion of a future existence altogether, and believe death to be not only the end of the bodily organism, but of the thinking mind as well?

It is indeed true that there is no such mathematical certainty respecting the future life, that a man cannot but believe that the results of moral action in this life must issue in a fixed retribution in that; but shall we therefore transfer the obscurity of the future life into this life, and seek to justify ourselves in blinking the palpable tendencies of virtue and vice, and in living as if present character had no determining influence on future condition? Then we may with equal justice reason similarly respecting the material universe. What is to be its future? Science

has done marvels in tracing the laws of the motions of the heavenly bodies. Movements which once seemed to be irregularities are now shown to be regulated by a higher law. The eclipses of the sun and moon can be accurately predicted; the erratic visits of the comets are deprived of their terror; and not only is it shown that the rotations and revolutions of the planets are among the most orderly and calculable of all things, but even what has at times seemed to be a newly-discovered irregularity has been, in its turn, subjected to law. The diminution in the eccentricity of the earth's orbit, the constantly-increasing rapidity in the revolution of the moon, the disturbances in the motions of some of the planets, the apparent motion of some of the stars, have been shown to be normal consequences of the same agency which keeps the heavenly bodies in their places. Every thing thus seems to point to an eternal continuance of the stellar and planetary systems. And yet astronomy cannot certainly assure us of their essential stability. The fact of the disappearance of some stars formerly known, and of the appearance of others not previously visible, is a staggering fact. Astronomy has no solution for it. If other stars may be blotted out, may not our star, our sun, also suddenly go out in utter darkness? Moreover, if, as is commonly supposed, the aerolites, which are consumed in the atmosphere of the earth, or fall to the earth itself, are really planets revolving around the sun, but arrested in their course by the earth's attraction, then we have here the fact of a disturbance in the movements of the smaller celestial bodies, which makes it impossible to affirm the eternal security of the larger

ones from similar catastrophes. The orbit of at least one comet intersects the orbit of the earth. No one can predict with certainty what would be the result, if the possibility of collision which is thus proved should ever become a reality. Furthermore, observations of Encke's comet show that its period of revolution is constantly diminishing at the rate of one day in twenty-five years. This diminution has led many to conjecture that (as is also assumed for other reasons) there is a resisting medium diffused through space. But this medium is an element not taken into account in the theories of planetary revolutions. If it exists, it must exist as a disturbing force, the effect of which, however slow may be the process, must be to retard the revolutions of the heavier as well as of the lighter bodies, and consequently to draw them nearer and nearer to the sun, till at last they are all swallowed up in it.

But these uncertainties respecting the future of our solar system cannot be justly used as arguments against the trustworthiness of astronomical science. On the contrary, it is for the most part by means of that science that we have learned what these uncertainties are. The dangers that threaten the stability of the planetary system are themselves suggested by a knowledge of forces that are already in activity. If we knew less about the laws and phenomena of astronomical bodies, we should have less occasion to doubt and to fear respecting their future condition.

Just so, and with equal justice, it may be said, that the doubts which, in the minds of so many, cluster around the problems involved in that momentous question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" are so

far from investing theology with the character of *uncertainty*, that they are rather the products of theological *knowledge*. Those who know and think and care the least about the present character of the human race are least troubled with doubts respecting its future condition. It is what revelation and religious science disclose *in general* concerning the inherent tendencies and normal issue of a holy or an unholy life, that starts that multitude of questions about the *details* of retribution and a future existence. If, because those questions cannot be answered with the certainty of demonstration, theology is charged with vagueness, and declared unfit to be called a science, then, because astronomy has started a multitude of insoluble problems respecting the future of the material universe, it too ought to be denounced as unworthy of our confidence.

IV. But let us turn from the past and the future of the moral world, and look at the present. Christian theology teaches that the human race is divided morally into two classes, — the good and the bad. It teaches that the distinction is a radical one, and that, in however germinal and imperceptible a form the different characters may exist, the difference is yet virtually world-wide.

But a great stumbling-block this. How, it is asked, can the fact of such a distinction be made out? It may be admitted, that, in extreme cases, differences in moral character become palpable to every observer. Such men as John Howard on the one hand, and Caligula on the other, seem like utter opposites; but, in the great majority of cases, we can trace at the

best only differences of degree, each man having his share both of the good and of the bad. Is it not, then, impossible to maintain this theory of a dividing line between the regenerate and the unregenerate? Is there not in the dogma a degree of uncertainty which deprives it of all claim to scientific respect?

Possibly; but, if so, the uncertainty is not without its parallel in the physical sciences. Those sciences have, as one of their chief problems, to deal with the distinctions between the various objects of investigation. Take, e.g., the elemental substances themselves. The ancient division of the elements into water, earth, fire, and air, had the merit of distinguishing things which really seemed to differ; but chemistry, one of the best established of sciences, has overturned all that. It tells us of great similarity where there is great apparent dissimilarity. And in fact, though it has multiplied the number of simple substances, still, in this, its results are not yet final: it cannot be regarded as certain that the number of elemental substances will not be increased by new discoveries, or (as is still more probable) diminished by the decomposition of those which have hitherto been regarded as simple. It is even thought that all the elements may ultimately be proved to be one in essential character, differing only in their relations. The whole atomic theory, on which chemistry rests, is questioned by many. It assumes that all simple substances are composed of atoms, — indivisible particles, aggregated, yet not united, not even brought into actual contact, but separated from one another by an imperceptible ether; and that, according to the degree of that separation between the ultimate particles,

the substance is either solid, liquid, or gaseous. But what is this ether? It too, according to the atomic theory, must be composed of atoms; and why do we not need a new kind of ether to fill up the space between these ethereal atoms, and so on *ad infinitum*? This ether is something which cannot be detected. Its existence is hypothetical; it is a name for our ignorance. And the atoms, too, are hypothetical: no one ever saw one, or ever can see one. And their indivisibility is hypothetical. If they occupy space (as is commonly assumed), then, even if not divided, they are at least divisible; for what has size may be reduced in size. On this theory, too, the chemical union of two or more substances can be nothing more than an aggregation of the atoms of the different substances; for the theory allows no actual contact: how, then, does chemical union differ from mechanical union? Thus we see, that, the farther science carries us in explaining the fundamental distinctions in material substances, the more numerous are the problems suggested for solution. And the most positive conclusion of all is, simply, that there are *apparently* differences between the various elements, and that these differences *probably* inhere in the ultimate atoms of which the elements are severally composed; but that these atoms themselves are unknown.

But if we turn from the chemical distinctions in matter, and consider those which belong to the department of natural history, we are confronted with similar indefiniteness. What is the difference between organic and inorganic matter? The same chemical substances are found in both. Chemically considered, there is no greater difference between

marble and an oak than there is between marble and quartz. The minerals pass into the vegetables, and afterwards return to the mineral kingdom. They thus go through a process; but so they do while they remain minerals. Chemical action is all the time and everywhere going on. The process of vegetation is only one of the forms of that action; and though it may be distinguished from other processes, yet why call it something so peculiar that it needs to be assigned to a class distinct from all others? The so-called vital principle which is assumed to underlie the vegetating process — what is it? Is it a material thing? If it is, who will seize and analyze it, or tell us what becomes of it when the plant dies? Does the disembodied vegetable life wander about till it finds lodgement in some new plant? Or is it immaterial? What better evidence have we of this than that all the other forces at work in Nature, forces as powerful as that of vegetation, are immaterial? Perhaps it may be said that they all are; but, if so, why call the principle of vegetation alone vital, as if all the others were dead?

What is the difference between animals and vegetables? Animals, we are told, feed on organic substances, and breathe oxygen, giving off carbonic-acid gas; while vegetables feed on inorganic substances, and exhale oxygen. But yet some of the lower animals emit oxygen gas like plants; and some of them live so deep in the water, that it is not known how vegetable food is possibly accessible to them. Moreover, some animals, as the earth-worm, have been thought to assimilate mineral substances directly; while many plants grow on other plants, and thus

feed on organic substances. This, then, hardly seems to be established as an infallible point of distinction. Animals have the power of locomotion ; yet not all of them : and, on the other hand, some plants have also the power of independent motion. This, then, is not the specific difference. Animals have sensation. But many of them seem to have little or none. The lower down we go, the less we find of it. In some of them, the existence of a nervous system has not yet been proved ; and some plants exhibit what seems as much like sensitiveness as can be found in the inferior classes of animals. Animals have intelligence. But it would be hard to prove that the oyster or the polypus has any thing more than the instinct of self-preservation ; and the plants which have the power of independent motion seem to exhibit as much intelligence as this. Certain it is, that, the lower we descend in the scale, the more do the two kingdoms seem to resemble each other ; so that there are some organic structures about which it is still disputed whether they are animals or vegetables. But if there is any doubt about any particular specimens, then there would seem to be doubt concerning the whole theory of a radical distinction between the animal and the vegetable world.

And, if we consider the distinctions among the animals, the uncertainty is equally great. The progress of science reveals similarity where a superficial observation does not find it. Even animals so unlike in appearance as mammals and fish are found to be modelled in physical structure according to the same general type. And, when the animals are examined in their embryonic growth, the resemblance is so

great, that, in the earlier stages of it, it is impossible to distinguish the incipient dog from the incipient horse. May it not be the case, then, that, as the various species are alike in being produced from an egg, and gradually diverge from each other as they come to maturity, so, in the infancy of the animal races, there was a resemblance among all the adult individuals, though in the course of ages there has been a gradual divergence. In other words, is it not possible, or even probable, that the differences between the different species of animals are the result of a gradual development rather than the unvarying continuation of a multitude of species distinct from each other from the first? So Mr. Darwin believes; and this is the theory which, we are told, now receives the sympathy of the majority of naturalists. To be sure, it is as yet confessedly only a theory. Its advocates admit that no clear instance of transmutation of species can be adduced. They confess that geology furnishes no discoverable specimens of a transitional species. They acknowledge that the sterility of hybrids is a weighty argument against the theory. Still they hold it. And an opinion which commands the assent of so many of those having the best opportunity to judge cannot be disposed of lightly. At the best, it must be confessed that here is an uncertainty in natural science.

And, even when we look for a definition of the essential difference between man and the other animals, we do not find the task perfectly easy. Some differences there are in physical structure; but the variations among the several human races are, in this respect, perhaps as great as the difference between the

lowest type of the human and the highest of the ape family. Is the difference chiefly a mental one? But some brutes exhibit a wonderful degree of mind, while many men show very little. And mental development is so closely connected with the use of language, that Mr. Huxley conceives it to be possible that "some inconspicuous structural difference may have been the primary cause of the immeasurable and practically infinite divergence of the human from the Simian stirps." Men deprived of human society, and left to grow wild, become bestial, and seem to lose the power of reason and of speech. Some men are born dumb, and others are born idiotic. May not these be sporadic instances of what was once the general law? It may or may not seem *probable* that a happy accident to the tongue or glottis of an ape or gorilla was the beginning of that divergence of the favored animal and of his posterity from his less favored kindred which has now become, as Huxley expresses it, "practically infinite." Still, accidental peculiarities of structure are sometimes transmitted from parents to children; and, at all events, the impossibility of the transition in question is not so demonstrated but that it is believed in by many scientific men. Let us at least admit that there is here a scientific uncertainty.

But what then? Even if it is conceivable that men are descended from speechless, irrational brutes; that the brutes are all only varieties of one original type of animal life; that animals themselves, distinguished in some cases with difficulty from vegetables, may have been developed out of them; that plants, in their turn, may have been originally the spontaneous

product of the soil ; in short, that all the phenomena of life are only a development of the forces inherent in matter, — what then ? What though the embryonic dog is indistinguishable from the embryonic child ? Shall we therefore ignore the difference between the fully-grown dog and the adult man ? Shall we invite dogs to occupy seats at our tables and in our churches, or leave children to gnaw bones, and sleep in kennels ? No : to us, after all, the material question is not, How came all these living things to be ? but, What are they in point of fact now ? The difference between the poppy and the mustard is to be looked for in the grown plant, not in the seed. We do not say, because the seeds are alike, therefore the plants must be ; but, because the plants are unlike, therefore the seeds must be. Because the difference between a human being and a baboon is “practically infinite,” therefore we reason that the difference must exist germinally, in all its grand significance, even in their earliest embryonic life, and must always have existed germinally somewhere, even in the lowest form of living things from which, if the Development theory be true, the human race ultimately sprung. That which is *certain* in the matter is, that the dignity and capacity of the soul of man immensely transcends the dignity and capacity of all other earthly things ; that which is *uncertain* relates only to the question how and where this superiority began. There is, in *fact*, a marked difference between men and brutes, between animals and plants, and between plants and minerals. It does not make that difference less marked or important to drag forward the points of resemblance, to compare the inferior and least known specimens of the two kingdoms,

and, from their resemblance to each other, to conjecture that the resemblances may once have been as general as they now are exceptional.

Just so we argue respecting moral and religious character. The difference between holiness and sin is "practically infinite." They are utter opposites. And every man, as a moral being, must be holy or sinful. Is it said that he may be both? In a certain sense, doubtless; for the character is not always found in its ripened form. But in the sense that holiness and sin can mingle together, and form a character radically and permanently indifferent, never! The moral character of a man is as much a unit as is his will, as is his personality itself. In its roots, in its germ, in that which, if unchecked, will grow, and be developed into mature power, the character cannot consist of two diametrically opposite principles; and, as there is no third kind of moral principle, the character of every man must be radically holy or sinful. And when we are told of the mixture of virtue and vice in the same man; when evidence is brought forward to prove that the distinction cannot be so sharp and universal as theology represents,—we can only say that moral character can be known only when it is fully developed: the difference between a saint and a sinner is to be judged by what appears when the central forces of character have had their perfect work. The specimens of character which we see are for the most part in their infancy. It is impossible for us to detect the differences which are only imperfectly expressed in outward forms, and which are obscured by the disturbing elements which check the natural development. But the differences exist: what they consist

in we know ; and therefore, though no one of us can judge his brother, yet all men are judged by One who knows the secrets of the heart ; and the result of that judgment cannot but always be a confirmation of the Saviour's words, " That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

V. One more parallel. Christianity not only emphasizes the distinction between holiness and sin, not only defines moral character according to its essential features and its ultimate products, not only confirms and develops the judgment of the natural conscience, that " whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap ;" but Christianity also professes to provide a remedy for the disorder and the danger. It offers a Saviour, to whom by faith and love we may be so united that the power of sin shall be broken, and the penalty of sin remitted.

But, it is objected, this offer comes through an historical channel : how can we be sure that the salvation is effective ? We have to depend on human testimony respecting the merits and claims of Jesus Christ : how do we know that it is trustworthy ? The narratives of the New Testament are exposed to criticism, as not perfectly to be harmonized with one another, and as containing strange stories of miraculous occurrences. Is not mere testimony, mere hearsay, altogether too uncertain a foundation for a faith which concerns a matter of life and death ?

So it may seem ; but what follows ? If nothing is to be accepted on the strength of testimony, then what becomes of our faith in the dogmas of natural science ? How much do we know about the science of chemis-

try, except as we know it through testimony? How many of us have obtained the slightest knowledge of the grand truths of geology by our own observation? Who of us can say, even, that he knows that the planets revolve around the sun, unless his faith in the testimony of astronomers is to him as good as the testimony of his own senses? Truly, if we are to hold our judgment in suspense until we can verify all the dogmas of the natural sciences by personal inspection of the facts on which they rest, those sciences will have to wait long before the world accepts them. Do not the naturalists demand it as a right, that, when they have taken careful observations, and made their inductions, we accept their testimony? Are they not indignant when that testimony is rejected or questioned without valid ground? And have they not a right to be indignant? It cannot be, then, that, merely because the truths and facts of Christianity are matters of testimony, we are justified in withholding our faith from them.

Is it said that there is this difference, — that the facts of natural science, unlike those of historical Christianity, are open to constant examination; that every one is invited, and has opportunity, to verify the conclusions of the adepts? But not all, in fact only a very few, are capable of doing this, though they are challenged to do it. And many facts are such as do not admit of repeated observation and verification. Do we doubt that meteoric stones have fallen to the earth, because we are not able to go to the spots where they are alleged to have fallen, and see them fall again? Do we doubt that islands in the ocean have emerged or sunk, because it is not possible at

option to see the process repeated? Do we begin to question whether President Lincoln was assassinated, because the number of witnesses was small, and the testimony can now never be corroborated by additional observation?

Is it said that so peculiar allegations as are made in the Christian Gospels need altogether peculiar testimony; that the inherent improbability of them is great enough to outweigh the historical evidence in their favor? Whether there is such inherent improbability, may be questioned; but, assuming it, do we always doubt improbable things because they are beyond verification? Is it inherently probable that any of the stars which have kept their places for ages, the very models of stability and regularity, should ever disappear? And yet do we doubt that one of the Pleiades is lost? Do we doubt the story (which is only a specimen of many) that Tycho Brahe saw a star in the constellation Cassiopeia, which blazed forth with a brilliancy surpassing that of any of the planets, and then gradually died away from sight, and has never been seen since?

Is it said, however, that these apparent anomalies in Nature are, after all, the results of natural forces, and would be seen not to be anomalies if we knew more about them, whereas the evangelical narratives ask us to believe in violations of natural law? And is it said that natural science has demonstrated the impossibility, and therefore the incredibility, of miracles? To this the reply is very easy. In the first place, neither natural science, nor any other science, can prove any event to be impossible, unless it proves the event to be *absurd*, — a contradiction of some other

event. To say, e.g., that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, does not contradict the fact that other men do not rise from the dead. In the second place, on this subject of miracles, the theologian has an equal right with the naturalist to pronounce judgment. It involves the question of a divine will acting through Nature, and, if it choose, otherwise than according to the ordinary action of natural forces. To deny the possibility of miracles is to deny the possibility of a divine intelligence. But natural science does not yet stand on this assumption. The greatest among the teachers of it have found no difficulty in acknowledging a God who rules supreme over the universe of mind and matter. We will not hold the *science* responsible for the atheistic utterances of some of its rasher devotees. We will not believe that, as a body, naturalists will ever so far step out of their province, and so far abandon their own fundamental principles, as to compel us to lose all confidence in them. No: *all* science is built on evidence. When any fact is alleged, a scientific man will ask for the evidence, not declare that no evidence is admissible.

But it may be said, that, though miracles may be conceded to be abstractly possible, yet they are improbable, and that, when, in addition to these accounts of miraculous events, we find in the narratives other improbabilities and discrepancies, we may safely throw aside the whole. Well, if any history has ever been sifted, the history of Christ has been; and no one need fear successful contradiction, when he says that the history of no other man or period has stood the test of examination so well. If the canons of criticism which many of those use who assail the credi-

bility of the four Gospels were to be used in criticising other histories, there would be no history left to us. If, because two historians of the same event do not perfectly agree in some unessential detail, we impugn the credibility of both, as many do in regard to the authors of the four Gospels, then it would be easy to overthrow faith in all history; and not only in all history, but in all natural science. Why, astronomers are not agreed as to the exact distance of the sun from the earth. Shall we therefore conclude that we have no reason for having confidence in any of them? Shall we say that perhaps the sun is a billion of miles off? or that possibly it is no farther from us than the moon? or even that it may be all in our eye? Soberly, this would be no more unreasonable than the course of many in respect to the history of Christ. He, the central figure in the history of the Church, is as prominently and distinctly defined as the sun in the firmament. As to the grand features of his character and works and claims, there is as perfect agreement in the only original histories of him extant as there is among astronomers respecting the relation of the sun to our solar system. No candid man can deny that mere historical criticism, fairly applied to the problem, whatever it might eliminate as doubtful and debatable, yet could not but leave the character and relations of Christ in their essential features, as they have impressed themselves on the world, undisturbed. No: he who rejects those histories cannot do so on merely scientific grounds. The anterior reason is a dogmatic one. He disbelieves, because he will not believe. He disbelieves, because the claims put forth by and for Jesus Christ are so extraordinary that he

will not admit them. Perhaps, probably, the most of those who deny the authenticity of the Gospels will confess that they deny it for that reason. There is to their minds so strong an antecedent improbability of the truth of the narratives, that they require stronger evidence than it is possible for any historical events to have. Be it so: still their objection is not scientific; it is dogmatic. Moreover, this dogmatic objection is outweighed, and more than outweighed, in the minds of others, by what seems to them an antecedent *probability* of the truth of the Gospels. To those who are keenly conscious of sin; who feel it to be an odious and culpable thing in the sight of God; who desire nothing more than to become rid of its power, and to obtain assurance of God's willingness to pardon and save; who long to know how they may be elevated above the debasing influences of a corrupt world, — to them such a revelation of God as is made in the life of Jesus is the most probable and welcome thing conceivable. It exactly meets their wants. In fact, so far from there being any improbability standing in the way of its acceptance, it is just those alleged improbabilities of the evangelical history which have secured for it a continued and increasing power in the world. This may, indeed, be called a dogmatic reason for *accepting* the gospel. Very well: let it be called such. It is as good at least as the dogmatic reason for rejecting the gospel: it is enough, at least, to counterbalance and neutralize that. The problem is thus brought back into the scientific arena, where the question to be answered is simply this: Whether Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and whether he has accomplished this object? Tried in

this way, if Christianity cannot stand the test and the contest, then no science is sure for another generation. As an historical fact, it rests still on an unshaken basis. It is supported by evidence not only satisfactory, but altogether peculiar. The Church of Christ has stood for eighteen hundred years. She has had to encounter every conceivable form of opposition. She has had to contend with all that learning, inspired by doubt and prejudice and hate, could do to overthrow her; yet she stands to-day as firm as ever. Confident that no new weapons of attack can be forged against her, and

“With salvation’s wall surrounded,
She can smile at all her foes.”

To conclude: the aim of what has been said has been to show, that, in any department of knowledge, the truths and facts which are *certain* must be adhered to and insisted on, however great may be the *uncertainties* with which they are connected; that doubt about the remote relations of a fact cannot be allowed to throw obscurity on the fact itself. It will have been observed, in particular, that the uncertainties in religious science which have been touched upon have for the most part had more or less relation to the fact or the doctrine of *sin*. This has been designed. For while, on the one hand, it has been freely confessed that there is much that is obscure, and hard to be understood, in the problems of theology, it may, on the other hand, be boldly insisted that these uncertainties are associated with, that in truth, to a great extent, they grow out of, a fact, — a fact as cer-

tain, as undeniable, as any in the whole domain of natural science; that is, the fact of sin. The testimony of consciousness on this point is as immediate as the testimony of the senses to the existence of an external world. The testimony is so universal and so consentaneous, that even those few who pretend to question it are as unable practically to be consistent in their doubts as are those few who have pretended to question the existence of a world of matter. And this fact of sin is a most momentous fact. It is a peculiarly practical fact. Christianity assumes (what the conscience of the race, benumbed though it is, yet admits) that sin is guilt, and that guilt is punishableness. And it addresses itself primarily, yes, only, to those who believe and feel that through sin they are enslaved to a power and exposed to a danger from which they cannot deliver themselves, yet from which they must be delivered, or be forever miserable. No others can judge it; no others can understand it. It comes to offer deliverance; and, in doing this, it coincides with the plainest dictate of reason and common sense, when it insists on making the consciousness of sin the first thing, the starting-point, in practical and theoretical theology. Let a man begin here; let him go where this plain fact of sin, of culpable, punishable, soul-defiling sin, leads him, — and he cannot go far wrong. Let him examine the claims of Christianity with the feeling — the only normal, right feeling — of a soul keenly conscious of guilt, and needing deliverance from the burden of it, and there will be little danger that the Jesus of the Gospels will be to him a stumbling-block or “a root out of a dry ground.” But if, instead of beginning with this obtrusive, press-

ing, practical fact of his own sinfulness, he starts in his theological inquiries with the speculative questions of the divine existence or of the decrees of God concerning the moral universe, and meditates long and hard on the problems of fate and free will, of Satan's fall, and Adam's sin, and infant morality, and the future life, until at last he finds the doctrine of sin, its origin and consequences, so puzzling that he doubts whether, after all, there is any such thing as sin ; if, in his studies of the historical side of theology, instead of beginning with redemption from sin as the great, urgent necessity of the soul, and looking at the claims of revelation as a means of saving the soul from death, he first takes up the history of Samson or of Jonah, or investigates the authenticity of the Pentateuch, or bewilders himself with the varying narratives of the birth of Christ, or with the mysteries of the book of Revelation, until at last he concludes that no certainty can be attained respecting the biblical histories, and that the whole Bible is a confused medley of strange things, then — what is he like ? He is like a man, who, because he cannot understand the Aurora Borealis, or the Zodiacal light, or the comets, or the variation of the magnetic needle, or the condition of the earth's interior, or the law of the transition from one species of fossil animals to another, or the exact nature of heat or electricity, or the vital principle, concludes, after fruitless speculation on these knotty points, that nothing can be certainly known about either the heavens or the earth, drags the obscurity of those remote and incidental problems down into the region of certainty, and is ready to hold, with Prospero, that —

“The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,”

or even are dissolved, “like the baseless fabric of a vision.”

If any man should now complain that I have not reconciled the Bible with the natural sciences, and should ask what I have to say about the Mosaic narrative as related to the great scientific problems of the antiquity and unity of the human race, of the geologic eras, or of the igneous origin of the universe; if he should inquire how I can explain all the discrepancies existing between the different books of the Bible, and how I can prove all the narratives of that book consistent with the character of a divine revelation to man, — then I answer that I have professed to do none of these things; that, in fact, my object has been to show that the settlement of such questions, even if not impossible, is yet not essential to the subsistence either of natural or of religious science; that these questions are the last, not the first, things to be disposed of in the progress of scientific investigation. If the fact of grave discrepancies between biblical and natural science is still thrust upon me as damaging many positions heretofore held by the theologians to be unassailable, then I answer, that, the object of revelation being to reveal God, and to reconcile man to him, there being therefore no contradiction possible between the main object of revelation and the main object of natural science, I am ready cheerfully to assent to any established results of this science. As to the alleged, but doubtful, contradictions, I *might* indeed say that the

progress of investigation may yet throw light, as it has already thrown light, on many of the obscurities of the Bible ; that, on some points, perhaps Jewish historians are as trustworthy as the Egyptian and Chinese ; that it is not necessary to reconcile the biblical with the scientific doctrine of the unity of the race, until scientific men have agreed among themselves whether Darwin on the one hand, or Agassiz on the other, is in the right ; that there is yet much to learn respecting the past history of our globe, the process and the relative rapidity of geologic changes ; that, at the worst, the Bible, in many of its representations of geologic and cosmogonic facts, exhibits a wonderful superiority to all other ancient books ; and that this superiority has never yet been explained by science on merely natural grounds. I might say this. Yet perhaps it may be as well only to say that I do not know how all these questions are to be answered. But let them be answered however they may be, and as soon as they may be, yet this I do know, that I am a sinner before God, exposed, if impenitent and hardened, to a just retribution ; and I know that Jesus Christ has offered himself to me as a Deliverer from sin, and that in him I may have salvation. I know that multitudes have found this deliverance. I know that thousands have been transformed in heart and life by the gospel, and by it alone. I know that the evidence of the efficacy of this plan of salvation, the evidence of the life and redeeming work of Jesus Christ, rests on a foundation which not only cannot be overturned, but which every century is making stronger. And, knowing this, I know that the revelation, of which Jesus Christ is the cen-

tre, can contain in it nothing that can be used for its own overthrow. I know that no man, led by conviction of sin to put his trust in Christ, can treat with contempt any part of the book which Christ himself indorsed as testifying of him. I know that, even if there are imperfections in it, even if the enemy of revelation is able to capture some of the distant outposts of the Christian fortifications, yet the central fortress of all is, and will forever be, impregnable. It is the Rock of Ages.

IV.

THE EQUILIBRIUM BETWEEN PHYSICAL AND MORAL TRUTH.

BY REV. THEODORE D. WOOLSEY, D.D., PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE.

SOME German commentators think that the nineteenth Psalm, beginning with, "The heavens declare the glory of God," and, in the middle, abruptly passing over to the perfection of the moral law of Jehovah, consisted originally of two separate parts, and that these fragments were joined together by some one who arranged the Psalms in their present form. If this could be made out, it would show the delicate feeling and tact of the compiler. He perceived that there was a bond of union between the glory of the visible heavens and the perfect law of the spiritual universe. We may say, in a similar spirit, that all the great facts, laws, and aims of the natural and the moral worlds have their centre and point of union in God. If a created mind could take a just survey of God's system, all the spheres of his action would appear full of his glory: there would be no impression of a clashing or conflict between them; but boundless wisdom and goodness would be felt to pervade the whole. And yet the supremacy would be seen to belong, not to the material, but to the

spiritual ; as, in man, the image of the universe, the invisible spirit, and, in the spirit, the moral faculties, though forming a close union with the body, take a place of importance above the bodily organization.

It is, however, quite possible for a man or an age to be incapable of taking so broad and impartial a view. Rarely can a mind of limited range be proportionate and equitable in its estimates of the physical and the moral system. The one makes its impressions on the intellect chiefly ; the other on the soul : the one is aided by the senses ; the other takes its best views when it can rise above the senses : the one startles by new truths ; the other has few or no discoveries to announce to a wondering world. They differ so much, that it is easy to overvalue one at the expense of the other. There may be an age when all inquiry centres on problems of the soul and of its relations to God : there may be another age, when physical science appears more sure in its inductions, more useful in its applications. At one time, for want, one would think, of something better to occupy human thought, all subtle and unpractical questions of ethics and theology are started and pursued with eagerness ; at another, the world despises such inquiries, and, as if nothing could be known of the soul's origin or destiny, throws itself upon the material world, its sciences and its uses. Thus ages change ; minds oscillate ; the past is looked on as childish and inane in its investigations.

And thus man, the two-sided being, the creature as well of sense and of reason as of conscience and faith, finds it hard to do justice to the two sides of

his nature, and to weigh in even scales physical and moral truth. Of two unlike kinds of knowledge, appealing to different parts of our constitution, and sustained by different kinds of evidence, he treats one with something like scorn; and so the good to be drawn from that source is principally lost. He is a half-man, and not a whole.

We intend to apply the title of the equilibrium between physical and moral truth to the fair and equitable judgments which trained minds ought to take in regard to these two main branches of human thought. That an exact adjustment of their respective claims is easy, or even possible, for a finite mind, we do not assert; and here we have to take into view the possibility of being unfair and partial ourselves. This, also, deserves to be noticed, — that, with the subdivisions of the fields of thoughts, men become less able, in some respects, to take comprehensive, unrestricted, and therefore fair views. Their own branch of knowledge is magnified, and all that lies beyond it is either undervalued or unknown. We may suppose the entomologist to have a contempt for the studies of the civil historian, which too often describe to us battles like those of kites or crows, as Milton somewhere expresses it; or the historian of man to regard natural history to be as much beneath his own pursuit as the animal is below the human being. Perfect fairness, then, among the votaries of moral and physical science, we do not expect; and the want of it we must pardon. But what we refer to when we speak of disturbing the equilibrium between these branches of truth is a fault of a graver kind: it is a thoroughly one-sided spirit, which, in an igno-

rant age, or in one otherwise ill balanced, will be apt to arise either from the speculative and free, or from the moral and religious, nature of man ; from immense advances of the one branch of truth, or the inability of the other to answer the questions, or remove the doubts, of the human mind.

Our subject is the importance of preserving this equilibrium between physical and moral truth. And, in entering upon the subject, we beg leave to call the attention of our hearers to some of the points in which the two departments of truth differ.

By physical truth, we intend all those sciences which are concerned with the facts and laws of matter, organized or unorganized, whether they are founded on observation alone, or on mathematical reasoning also. They are all subject to invariable laws, whether of life, animal, or vegetable, of crystallization, of affinity, of attraction, or of some other controlling force. They make their appeals to the intellect only: they contain no moral element, and could be studied and pursued with success if man had no moral nature. Under this class, which includes the sciences usually called natural and physical, may be ranged, by a slight extension of our definition, linguistics, ethnology, and even psychology, until you come to the moral nature of man. By moral truth, we intend all that acts immediately in forming character through the sense of duty, the affections, and the ideal of a perfect life. Here the leading branches are ethics, jural and political science, religion, and, in a sense, the history of mankind. Religion, indeed, may be said to have something like a physical side, in so far as the natural attributes of

God do not, of themselves, suggest motives, or reach in their influence beyond the intellect of man. But, the moment that the human mind conceives of God as endowed with personality and moral qualities, at once the influence of the natural attributes passes over beyond the physical limit to add majesty to the Being who reveals himself as the moral Governor. I call Christian religious truth a branch of moral, although it is very much more. Its essence is that it is religious; but its grand distinction among the religions is, that in it morality and religion are so fused together, that the highest motives and the highest ideal in morals are drawn from God himself.

Physical truth is concerned with fixed laws; and the progress of the worlds, the history of change, plays but a small part in this branch of science. Space is its field, rather than time. And yet there are important exceptions to this remark in the history of the earth and the natural history of man, to which cosmogony and the history of change in species must be added whenever the theories in these departments shall be currently received as established truth.

To man, the relations of physical science are indirect, but of great importance. Almost every ascertained law has its applications, some of which deserve to be put on a level with revolutions in society and government. Thus, although, as science, physical truth has a positive influence only on the individual *mind*, it enters as a great factor into the history of civilization.

Physical truth by its nature is continually adding

to its stores, and taking a stronger grasp on the minds of men. Nothing known is lost; and the unknown is ever revealing itself to the explorer. Observation leads to law; one law to a parallel or a higher one: the conquest is steady, and the power to make it steadily increasing. There are no bounds to the increase in the future; if there were, the stoppage of discovery and the closing of the book of knowledge would read the doom of the mind, perhaps the doom of the world.

Moral truth, on the other hand, finds its sphere in free, responsible man himself, in character and society. It holds important relations with time, because man is a being of progress. Even religion, being given to advance human nature, partakes of this progress, as a series of revelations which add to the stock of truth, and act with new force on character.

The end and aim of moral truth is a practical one, — to form man after the highest idea of perfection; while physical truth, great as its uses are, would be complete without them. The applications of moral truth to life and character are various, and on a great scale; yet they are so unpretending, owing to their having an unobserved influence, and acting very much on the inner life, that they are liable to be undervalued and distrusted.

While society and man are progressive, moral truth is capable of but little progress. The theories of ethics and of politics have made but slow advances since Aristotle. Systems of religious doctrine have, indeed, shown marvellous dexterity in their construction: but the schoolmen are forgotten; Catholic doc-

trine has been discarded by Protestants; and the Protestant doctrines of the Reformation have suffered changes under the influence of new metaphysics, and of new interpretations of the Scripture. Nor is it too much to say, that, however considerable are the improvements which have been introduced into jural and political science, their condition at present is far from being satisfactory.

The attention of men, as we have said, may be unduly engrossed by one or the other of these branches of truth; or for some reason lying in human ignorance, or in the love of novelty, there may be a one-sided regard paid to the one, to the prejudice of the other. Let me illustrate this tendency to one-sidedness for a moment, and very briefly, by the want of balance and fairness of mind which the advocates of moral and religious truth have shown in their feelings toward physical truth in the ages past. Man never was without some primary religious convictions and some simple worship; but he was without science. Now, the inevitable result of the introduction of the physical sciences is to disturb and to correct his views of the world. But these views of the world are associated, it may be, with his religion; and his religion, though he be a heathen, is one of his great interests. Thus Diagoras of Melos, the atheist as he was called, and the apostle Paul alike, by denying the existence of the gods of Greece, fell into conflict with the popular feeling: the latter was driven away from Ephesus; the other died by public verdict of the Athenians.

Again: at certain stages of human cultivation, faith in divine providence implies that God is imme-

diately active without the agency of fixed laws. But the uniformity of the course of Nature is made more apparent by every fresh discovery ; and the probability of divine interference where the law of Nature has not been ascertained becomes less and less. But it pains the religious man to see God thus put out of sight ; and he also shrinks back from such doctrine, for the reason that he is afraid it will shake his faith. Hence he is intolerant towards the investigations of science ; he looks on that department of truth as hostile to religious truth ; he dreads every new discovery as a foe to his peace. But, in reality, it was his own ignorance, his own preconceived notions, which created a subjective hostility, and which filled him with suspicion and distrust. There was no opposition between the forms of truth themselves : there was none, perhaps, in the votaries of science ; or, if there were, they were guilty of equal one-sidedness through a kind of self-defence. Had he asked himself what Nature and man could do without fixed law, and how miserable man would be without a belief in fixed law ; had he noticed his own unshaken, inborn faith in the permanence of natural order ; or had he felt the power of such texts as, “ Thy faithfulness [i.e., Thy adherence to a fixed system] is unto all generations ; Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth,” — he would have perceived that neither the necessity of things, nor his own conviction, nor the word of God, justifies his attitude toward the sciences of Nature.

We may add the remark, that the sciences that have to do with truth, moral and religious, are injured in their subject-matter by ignorance of Nature. Let an

age like that of the schoolmen attempt to construct systems of philosophical theology, how many false assumptions must it not make in regard to the relations between God and the world ! how many insufficient proofs from Scripture must it not adduce, which a little knowledge, even of geography, would have thrown aside ! We may say that the creation is an interpreter of God, and that his moral attributes cannot be properly looked at without a knowledge of his natural ones. And that the glories of the material universe, as discovered by science, elevate our conceptions of God's moral nature, that they throw dignity and grandeur into all our thoughts concerning him, will not be questioned.

Still further : it is obvious that the superstitions, which, in an ignorant age, grow upon the religious belief of men, are dispelled by the light of science, and that this is a gain for morals and religion. The so-called science of astrology vanished from the countries where modern astronomy acquired a firm foothold. The delusions of witchcraft, which strong and true religious feeling could not overcome, are driven from the minds of men by more accurate notions of the relations between the spiritual and the material worlds. The miracles of the middle ages, so numerous and so useless, could not have been credited by monk or people if the laws of Nature and the meaning of the miracle had been understood. The practice, so common even until now, of accounting for particular diseases as judgments on particular national sins, instead of connecting disease and sin in general, is set forth in its falsity by advanced medical science and improved sanitary regulations.

Thus, when natural science adds to its store of facts, establishes its inflexible laws, and spreads its results through society, religion, in the common mind, becomes more intelligent, liberal, and courageous; the truth of God, the holy and good, puts on a higher grandeur; and there is no longer any of that jealousy which ignorance fosters between departments of knowledge which alike have their centre in God. The disturbances of the relations between moral and physical truth, caused at first by ignorance, are now ended.

We have briefly considered one side of our subject, — the healthy influence of science in separating from spiritual truth the errors that cleaved to it and marred it in an ignorant age. Another side remains, more practical and important at the present time, for which, indeed, the present lecture was prepared. It may happen that physical science takes such a start, and has such a hold on the respect and admiration of men in a certain age, that moral truth is thrust into the background, its relative importance is under-estimated, its modes of proof are rejected, its domains are invaded and crept over by physical science, which, like some vigorous plant, runs its roots under the ground, and brings all the virtues of the soil within its control. It is to this disturbance of the due balance between these two departments of truth that I now invite your attention. Permit me, first, to inquire what are the facts touching their present and expected sway over the minds of men; then, next, to examine the bad effects of such a sway held by physical science; and, finally, to offer my views in regard to the true remedy.

The topic is, you will have observed, a subjective one. It relates to opinion, to the mind of man as affected by the shifting images of truth, as they come from outward nature and from the moral and religious faculty in the soul. To talk of a due balance between any two kinds of truth, as they are in themselves, would have no meaning. It is man, the observer, the knower, the social and responsible being, whom we have in view. Nor can any one fairly deny the importance of the subject as thus defined; for, great and venerable as truth is, man, who is capable of much more of it than is now within his reach, is still greater.

It will be noticed, also, that the subject derives importance from its connection with the progress of civilization. It asks, What will be the result in the future, what form and tone civilization will have, if knowledge of the world be indefinitely increased, while, at the same time, moral causes are losing their influence? Can intellect take the throne, and set itself above duty and religion, without injury to the temporal interests of man? Questions like these press upon all minds, whether trained in physical or in moral science, or in both; and the answer involves the future welfare of mankind.

I. We will now proceed to consider the position which the two kinds of truth are occupying at the present day before the minds of men, and the prospects they seem to have for the future. First, physical science is hopeful, enterprising, and even audacious. It claims the future and the unknown as its inheritance. There is scarcely a problem on earth or

in the sky which it acknowledges to be beyond its reach. It attempts to rule the age, and, by its endless succession of new discoveries, not only startles mankind, but commands deserved respect; for what but a right method of investigation, and a firm hold of man's reasoning powers on the processes of Nature, could have accomplished such solid and lasting results? Compare it with what it was a century ago. In all the departments of animated nature, and in the vegetable world, the accessions to our knowledge have been almost boundless. New forms of life, invisible before, have been revealed to man's eye by the microscope; and the Earth has opened her fossil treasures to our gaze, as witnesses to the antiquity of the creation. The science of chemistry, then in its childhood, was easily grasped; but now its numberless details, its compounds, whether existing in Nature or formed by the skill of man, the endless relations of its elements, need almost a lifetime to master them. The science of physics professes to have crowned the most subtle and patient investigations with the discovery that motion, light, and heat are forms of one and the same force. The science of physiology is boldly attempting to show how species have been evolved from earlier forms, and organic life from the simplest cells, not to mention its brilliant revelations touching the nervous system and other parts of the animal structure. The science of astronomy seemed almost complete a hundred years since; yet the shooting-stars were not then understood, nor the nebulae resolved, nor double stars found to move in orbits, nor the great precision of the newer astronomical tables reached, — much less was it suspected that an investigator on the earth

could detect forms of matter, the same which he sees around him, in the sun or in a remote star. And, to give but one instance more, the grand science of geology has been born, we may say, within the last hundred years, — a science, which, by its strange disclosures of long world-periods, and of life on extinct patterns, and of a progress of the earth fitting it for its present inhabitants, gives a new shape to the history of the creation.

By the side of these sciences of Nature stand the moral sciences, confounded at the superior place which matter and its laws are occupying, and holding their breath, as it were, lest some new discovery should overturn old philosophies and old religions. There seems to be a consciousness in them that they have sunk in respectability, and have lost a part of their credit in the eyes of men. How large the material universe is growing! how grand are the newly-ascertained facts and laws! how great the encouragement to research! while in morals nothing new is found out, and much of the old is questioned or exploded. The impression which this comparison is calculated to make on thinking men is enforced among the masses by the benign applications of scientific knowledge to the comfort and welfare of the world. Nothing in the modern world is more remarkable or wonderful than these uses of science for the earthly good of mankind. Above all, the perfection of machinery, and the inventions of the age, witness to an amount of study and talent that seems beyond the powers of man. Every locomotive is a history of conquests of man over matter. And, when men think of such things, they

hope for vastly more. Who knows whether the perfection of man may not be reached in the way of physical law. The golden age is to come, some think, by knowledge of science and the arts, not by knowledge of God and duty.

It deserves to be remarked also, as I have hinted already, that moral truth, being noiseless and old, can have but little *éclat* by the side of these new lords of man's thinking. No age before was so benevolent or reformatory: and yet these movements are secret; they produce no instant effect; they counteract decline, rather than promote progress; they affect here and there a man, and not the mass of men; and, if they change the face of society, men, ere long, forget the false opinions, the bad habits, the misery, of times past, and so cannot estimate the greatness of the advance. On the other hand, the leading applications of science have a loud-voiced introduction into the world, and they embody profound thought. While the principal movements in the moral sphere seem easily devised, and need no great power of mind to carry them forward, the advances due to physical truth are so many glorifications of man and his intellect.

II. The sum of what has been said thus far is, that the relation of the two kinds of truth to one another is not the same as it was in the last age; that their former equilibrium has been disturbed; that moral truth has lost, and physical gained, weight in the judgments of men. It is an interesting inquiry, what the effects of this change are to be in human society and

on character. Can character continue to find the same food for its healthy growth which moral and religious truth formerly supplied? Can man discuss with a continued interest the problems of society and the soul? Will convictions that the will is free and the individual responsible for his actions retain their strength when the dominion of law and of necessity shall have been vastly extended? Is there possibly a leaning, when the human eye is fastened on the processes of Nature, to a loss of the sight of God? And, if the philosophy most consistent with the reign of necessary law should prove to be a fatalistic one, would not moral motives be stripped of their strength, and the interests of the soul occupy a secondary place?

We will look at the evils which may grow out of the over-weight of physical truth; giving, however, two cautions beforehand, lest we should be charged with narrowness. First, we do not wish, in the least degree, to produce a jealousy of the sciences which have to do with Nature. Theists and Christians ought to harbor no such jealousy: they may suspect the spirit of philosophers; but they ought not to fear Nature itself, which to them is only God thinking and acting under the forms of matter. Whether, then, he who finds out a new law of Nature be an Atheist, or a Pantheist, or a Positivist, we will honor his mind, we will treasure up his results with thankfulness; for has he not removed a little piece of the curtain which hid our Creator and our Father from our eyes?

Our other caution is, that we do not wish to be classed among the alarmists, who are well-nigh ready

to flee from the citadel of our faith because some blows have been struck against its walls, — struck, perhaps, against outposts which ought to be abandoned. We must expect controversy, defection, opposition: but, as we believe, the end will be that man will acknowledge nature and revelation to be from the same Author; and that religion and science, with joined hands and uplifted eyes, will praise Him “who is and was, and is to come.” There may be, however, a general prevalence of an irreligious philosophy. If, in such a state of things, Theism were in question, if its interests were at stake, I should tremble in view of the decision of the human mind; but, strange as it may seem to some, Christianity is stronger than Theism, for the very reason that it affirms more, and touches man’s life more closely, and penetrates farther into the soul. Theism as a religion, and as a source of motive power, has no life or strength; but Christianity, we believe, through its permanent and real energy, will direct the lives of men in the coming ages, when the sciences of Nature shall have travelled out of sight of their present boundaries.

1. Among the probable evils of an overweight of physical science, we mention, first, that man and his higher interests will lose importance when placed by the side of the all-embracing laws of Nature. As, in the more ignorant times, moral realities needed the study of the outer world to keep them in their due place; so, now and hereafter, there must be some corrective to the one-sided influences that come from the other quarter.

The study of Nature can easily lead to an exagger-

ated estimate of the importance of Nature, especially if it be regarded, as all true philosophers must regard it, as an end in itself. The success in the study, the growing vastness of the field, the satisfactoriness of the results, all tend to magnify the importance of physical science; but our deepest convictions assure us that the soul is worth more than a star, and that its interests, summed up in the improvement of character, are the end for which worlds were made. It is true that this conviction in the minds of ascetic and contemplative moralists may become unpractical; may lead to self-conceit and idle vagaries: but this only shows that balance and counteracting forces are needed for the perfection of character. Would not the due balance be disturbed if the grandeur of the results, the nature of the laws, the utility of the applications, of science, exclusively absorbed human thought? Could men fail, in that case, to have the impression, — an impression which curiosity and wonder and the interest of novelty would strengthen, — that Nature, or, in other words, the vast system of laws, with their results through the universe, is deservedly the highest object of human attention?

This tendency and its effects would show themselves, as they have done already, in new theories of civilization. Man is not to be advanced by moral causes, but by knowledge. Moral causes have shown their weakness in the past: the future, which belongs to science, will perfect human nature chiefly by supplying to all men healthy and pleasant food for thought; and this, as some seem to think, whether

God is admitted to exist and to stand in any relations to man or not.

And, again, a new education will, of necessity, clinch the nail, and add to the relative force of physical science. Formerly, the end of education was conceived to be to discipline the mind, including all the faculties that have any relations to truth; or, still better, to train up the young into true manhood. Am I unjust in saying that a new theory, suggested by the vast amount of knowledge in the world which the new sciences have accumulated, even now finds the end of education in imparting knowledge, especially of physical law?

I wish further to say, under this head, that there is something crushing in the revelations of the vastness and the inexhaustibleness of Nature, if it be not corrected by an impression of the dignity and worth of man.

Take the best condition of the mind for physical study,—a real faith in a personal God; and yet how difficult even then is it to believe that a creature so insignificant as man can be cared or provided for! The immensity of the creation makes the advent of the Son of God in this world seem incredible to many; and this impression grows with our knowledge of the greatness of the universe.

But there is another influence which cannot so much be weighed as felt: it may be exemplified in the feeling excited by the sight of the starry heavens. The impression in this case may pass beyond the bounds of sublimity and awe, just because modern astronomy reveals new depths and stretches of the

creation. I must profess, for one, that the illimitable creation in a starlit night suggests to me thoughts that are sometimes immensely painful: they crush me, something as revelations of God crushed the prophets; they annihilate me, so to speak; and, if the impression were perpetual, they would incapacitate for the work of life. There is need of some feeling of the grandeur of man to counteract this feeling of material littleness and limitation. To this it will, no doubt, be replied, that the methods and results of physical research give most abundant testimony to the intellectual greatness of man. This is most cheerfully admitted; and yet it is true that admiration of intellect has no tendency to raise the value of character, but rather diminishes the estimation in which it is held. If respect for knowledge and for power of mind greatly preponderates, the real value of man is lost sight of: as a *person*, he has sunk in his significance.

2. Akin with what we have said is another remark, — that inflexible law, the wider it extends its sway over thinking, abridges so much the sense of moral freedom. I by no means ascribe all fatalism to this source. It may originate in a desire to escape from the painful sense of guilt, or in the speculations of the metaphysicians touching the sway of motives over the human soul; or the theologian may fall into it by a false theory of the agency of God. Nor do I mean that naturalists are generally necessitarians, but that the tendency in their investigations is all in that direction. They have never detected a fact, which, if it could be explained, did not point towards law.

“All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” And the fixed statutes of Nature which have been made known in the most recent times exceed in number all that were proclaimed before since man began to think. One can almost hear the clanking of the adamantine chain forged to fetter and manacle Nature, and can see Force and Strength fastening her to the rock of necessity. If, now, these sciences of Nature are to govern with something like an exclusive sway in the future, no man ought to be surprised if motive and action shall be explained by them in the same sense as physical causes and effects. Such a result is not only natural, but in one aspect venial; since our habits of reasoning are formed by our prevalent pursuit. But if freedom of choice is explained as an illusion, if necessity enters into the sphere of the mind, responsibility, sin, the freedom of political life, justice, are sapped at their foundation.

I know that it may be said in reply to this, that the fatalistic tendency finds a corrective in the unalterable convictions of the mind and the practical judgment of life. This is true to a degree: celestial and terrestrial mechanics are not likely to destroy the sense of injustice in the philosopher who is slandered. But the question still remains a fair one, whether, when the law and order of the universe shall bear with all their force, in education and contemplation, upon the mind of man, he will not find it harder to believe in freedom and responsibility than before. They must have an insensible influence from which it will not be easy to escape; and theories of

human thought will the more easily be received which resolve it all into a quality of material organism, or into the necessary activity of universal being.

3. I proceed to remark, in the next place, that the applications of scientific discovery, being all material, add only to the earthly side of our civilization. Whether it shall degenerate or advance, shall be material only, or spiritual also, will depend on the ability of moral truth to retain something of its old importance in the eyes of mankind. The danger is, that the inventions, which, as a matter of course, must follow the steps of physical science, will fill men with false hopes. Society is to outgrow, as many conceive, its superstitions, its violences, its excesses, its inequalities, by the ministry of science to the wants of man; while, as we have said before, the relief of human ignorance will come from the same source. These expectations imply a conviction that all known moral and religious influences are too weak to reform the character and life of man; that they have failed, and must fail; and that the problem of man's progress must be left in the hands of science to be worked out. Man looked to moral causes in the infancy of the world because they were his whole stock; but he has become richer with a kind of fixed capital which will be as durable as time.

In all this, people forget, as we hinted once before, the noiseless works of mercy by which sin and misery are diminished; they forget the co-operations for every kind of reform, and the vast political effects that have followed opposition to certain kinds of social evil. But the result is an unfortunate one: it is exemplified

by what is called secularism, or the doctrine that no motives are to act on man but such as are drawn from the present life. The earthly paradise — a soft, passive, epicurean state, resembling the strain of Mr. Morris's delightful poetry — is not to be reached by the energy of benevolence, but by mechanical and chemical science. And thus not only is the handmaid changed, but the house, also, is altered. Pleasure, instead of character, is the garnished abode ; science, in the place of morals, is the servant. That character will be in danger of losing its tone in such a state of things, unless a corrective be found within the moral sphere, or from some discipline of events which shall strengthen character, must be apparent.

4. It is important, again, to look, for a moment, at the relations of physical science to the doctrine of a God and to the supernatural. Some have most unjustly charged this department of investigation with being atheistic, when many of its most eminent votaries in earlier and in modern days, in Europe and in America, have been Theists, or even devout Christians. It would be more true to say that natural science is indifferent and in equipoise in regard to the claims of religion, since great scientists may be found scattered through all the sects of thought. They have been Atheists and Pantheists as well as Theists ; they have held to a plastic life, to a necessary development, to the negation of proof that there is a God, as well as to some mode of Theistic speculation, either admitting or excluding the supernatural. But I regard even this as an unjust charge. It is doubtless true that the majority of philosophical students of Nature at the present day reject positive

religion, and it may be that they believe in no personal God: but this cannot be laid to the account of their pursuits; it is more to be ascribed to the metaphysical systems which have had currency in the age. You might as well charge Comte's views to his mathematics as to any influence of natural science; and it could have been no influence of Nature that formed the system of Hegel. It would be doing better justice to say that the reigning metaphysics determines the course of thinking which the physicist will take, as well as that which the student of history or of social science takes. We cannot easily escape the laws of thought which have been inculcated on us by that science which does the most to form our thinking faculty; nor can we prevent the effect of philosophical assumptions made in the books, or by the teachers that have inducted us into science. Most men who have been original and profound in their own special department of Nature have not had leisure or inclination for metaphysical studies; and they adopt without long examination that which is current.

But after saying all this in defence of physical truth, against the charge of leading to Atheism, we have to mention certain of its tendencies, which, if they were not counteracted from some other source, might be baneful. The first is, that it tends to shut God out from all present intercourse with the universe. Grant that he created matter, which some would deny more positively than they would reject a miracle, yet he is only the prime motor thousands of æons in the past. The blind forces of the world have given birth to all geological changes; species have developed from a primitive type; matter once in motion turned into worlds:

he is thus as far off as the beginning of things, and has as little to do with us as the *primum mobile*. "If God had slept a million years, all things would be the same." This is the almost necessary impression that the more modern theories in cosmogony and the doctrine of species make on the mind; and there is in them a striking return to the speculations of those Greek philosophers to whom God or the gods had no scientific value. That they must, if received and not neutralized, stiffen our knees and shut our mouths for prayer, is not too harsh a charge.

But let us suppose this tendency not to exist, and let all the treasures of Nature within the reach of science be opened for the display of the glory of an all-wise Providence. It will still remain true, that the eyes of all men would be drawn toward the natural attributes of God, while his moral attributes would suffer an eclipse. Their old relations to one another are disturbed. The moral government of the world has lost its relative grandeur. The natural attributes of the Deity crush us by the new revelations of infinitude. The mind is repelled, rather than invited to confidence. The great universe makes us afraid of God: we dare not trust him nor commune with him. It is—to compare great things with small—as when the traits of character of a man of powerful intellect are lost in the splendor of his genius, and strength of mind: we admire him, but do not come nigh him.

5. But again: the decided preponderance of physical truth will tend to weaken the power of imagination and of faith. No faculty of our nature craves exemption from restraint more than the imagination:

it is, in fact, entirely the opposite of science. It needs a certain vagueness of outline, and a license to wander at will in the fields which it loves ; but science insists on exact definitions, maps out Nature as with a surveyor's chain, and explains those things which awakened awe and a sense of the sublime while they lay half unknown. It imputes personality to impersonal existences ; it gives life and voice to Nature. But science preaches law which worketh death in the outward world, and makes small account of the invisible. If science govern the mind, it must weaken the imagination.

As the same causes seem to affect faith and imagination ; as the faculty which conceives of the invisible, and paints it in hues of beauty, is an important aid to faith, — faith must suffer, in like manner, from the overweight of physical science. The difficulty will be increasingly great of realizing unseen things, and of trusting in an unseen God, the more science explains the phenomena of the world, and the more it controls the thinking of men. Do we find it so very easy now-a-days to believe in prayer, or even to live as in the sight of God ? and can we not trace this, in part, to physical science, which has been moulding our minds, little as we may be acquainted with its minutiae ? May not some of us have felt now and then that the evidences of freedom and intelligence in the universe were vanishing from our minds, or have indulged the wish that we had lived in an age when this dreadful barrier of second causes did not rise up before us like a wall reaching to heaven ; when this “law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not,” did not forbid us to “ask a petition of any God” ?

6. From all that has been said, it will result that an over-valuation of physical science will not be of advantage to the healthy growth of character. It is true, that all intellectual discipline withdraws the mind from the temptation to lead an ignoble or sensual life, and encourages such habits as caution, patience, modesty, love of truth, which are buttresses of character. But physical science can suggest no motives for action swaying the conscience, or directly formative of character. It abstracts the mind from persons, and fastens it on things: personal relations, therefore, affections, the government of souls, lie beyond its province. It can never appeal to the sense of right, or lend to it any direct support. It suggests no idea of a perfect life, nor can it reveal the destination of man. It cannot notice or heal the imperishable sense of sin which belongs to man. It has, therefore, nothing hegemonic in its nature, like the science or sciences, which, through the feeling of obligation, assume the control of man. How, then, can it govern character? It cannot even supply the materials to be used in disciplining character, nor help man to understand his condition here, nor the duration of his being, nor his relations to God, towards whose very existence it maintains an uncertain or a neutral attitude. It has a grand sphere and a future of glory before it; but its vocation lies not in cultivating the moral sensibilities, or purifying the moral nature. Its attempts, should it make them, to supersede moral truth, or to bring it under the category of necessary law, to monopolize education, or to take society under its especial care, would be disastrous.

III. It is now the right time to inquire whether there is any way of restoring the equilibrium between the two branches of truth ; whether those departments of it which contain the motives leading to right character and a perfect life can put forth some new, some reserved power of self-preservation. In the ages when the moral sciences, including religion, took too exclusive possession of human thought, the remedy lay in the growth of physical science. It forced its way against bigotry, superstition, cowardly fear, and even persecution. Can moral truth do as much ? There are two points to be considered here, which we will take no pains to keep distinct. Can it retain the respect of the world ? Can it exercise its appropriate power over and through the convictions of mankind ?

It may be thought, that, if manifest evil should grow out of the under-valuation of moral truth, a re-action would ensue, and the cravings of society for a better state of things would work a cure. Such re-actions are, in fact, not uncommon ; and, as man's moral nature is permanent, it will ever silently or loudly demand reform of felt evils. It is true, of course, that such a re-action is possible ; and in all reforms, whether of the individual or of society, we must take it for granted that an appeal can be made to the fixed nature of man. But, without a new power of moral truth, the mere evils of society no more work out their own cure than the disorders of the single soul rectify themselves. The feeling, that the existing state of things is deplorable, is but a blind, helpless longing for something better. If it lean on moral causes, they are the true remedies : if it have none

such to lean on, a nation or a man may continue in degradation without the power of attaining to a better life.

I see no prospect that the *moral sciences* — including the jural and political, but excluding, for the time, history and theology — will take a much higher place among men than they do now. They make, as we have said, no new discoveries; they are deduced from principles of a kind admitting of endless dispute; they are in themselves dry and uninviting. If a fatalistic philosophy should infuse into them the denial of human freedom, they would cease to be moral, and, owing to their bearings on life and the soul, would do more harm than could be imputed to the physical sciences themselves by their most narrow opposers. Or if we could suppose that they had bowed their necks to the yoke of fatalism, while, at the same time, the physicists had reached the conclusion that the forces of Nature were but modes of divine action, we should then have to look to physical philosophy itself for the reformation of opinion.

Again: *history* cannot effectually resist any one-sided tendencies of physical science. If history should take the direction of necessary development which is given to it in the leading systems of modern philosophy, it can do harm to the moral nature, rather than good. Supposing it constructed on the principles of freedom and free progress, it may warn, elevate, and supply with hope; but it cannot have the freshness and attractiveness of modern physical science. Moreover, its influence consists rather in the moral principles of the man who interprets it, than in events themselves. If the world should accept a philosophy of

history constructed, as far as can be, on the theory of a divine development ending in Christ, that would be nothing else than Christianity explaining history: it would be no independent service performed by history itself.

Nor, again, can we expect much to be accomplished by a movement like that of Socrates,—an inculcation of the *practical* as opposed to the scientific, of the interests of man as opposed to the study of Nature. For the importance of Socrates as a reformer lay not simply in the direction towards ethics, which he gave to the mind, but in this also,—that the physics of the age before him were worthless, and without foundation. You may persuade men that the soul's interests are paramount, for this is true: but you cannot persuade them that our modern science, built on induction, and giving birth to a thousand devices for human comfort, is worthless; for all see that this is false. If you did this, you would belittle moral science itself by abridging the scope and dignity of our nature. Add to this, that you cannot avoid the scientific even in morals and religion: if you could, you would place these subjects of thought below all others that had a scientific basis, and thinking men would be repelled from them; so that, in the end, the interests of practical morals and religion would suffer. Besides, where is the practical impulse to come from? and how is it to be kept up? What other source has it, or can it have, besides profound impressions, and convictions originated by truth? How can the practical spirit hold out, if the truth which contains the motive-power is undervalued? We must beware, when we join in what the present age says against

dogma, lest we go beyond a want of confidence in human systems of truth, and speak lightly of Truth herself.

The true quarter from which to look for a preservative against the evils that may come from the overweight of physical science is, as I believe, *Christianity*. And, in saying this, I do not mean to be understood as affirming at this time that Christianity will keep its hold on the faith of the world in the next age, — to consider which would be aside from my subject, — but that, if believed, it will give dignity, power, and acceptance to moral truth.

Before an audience like that which I have the honor to address, it may seem superfluous, and almost impertinent, to speak of the relations between Christianity and moral truth; yet completeness demands that I should do this in a brief statement.

First, then, a revelation from God adds a dignity and divine authority to its subject-matter. If the law of gravitation had been so singled out among the laws of Nature as to be imparted to man by revelation, all men would have felt it to be of pre-eminent importance as a law of laws; as having more of the divine about it than the laws which men found out for themselves. One of the ancients said, “*E cælo descendit γῶθι σεαυτόν,*” as if to point man to the study of himself were worthy of emanating from the skies. He showed the feeling, that such an origin could pertain only to those truths which affect human interests most deeply.

But, secondly, this revelation is intensely moral. It is religious, and, therefore, far more than moral: but the thought breathing through it of a holy God,

spiritual and heart-searching ; of a moral law binding soul as well as life ; of a moral universe having one code for all its worlds, — this greatly exalts moral truth ; and with it the worth of the soul, the value of character, the vastness of the theatre where moral beings act their part, are all wonderfully enlarged. Now we rise above earthly relations, virtue grows into holiness, imperfections turn into sins, and sin, darkly discerned in all religions and by all races, shows its proportions by being made the principal cause for which God gave the revelation.

Thirdly, the Scriptures add weight and meaning to morals by their disclosures of the nature and dignity of man. It is remarkable, that while Atheism takes from existence its meaning, and Pantheism destroys the freedom and nobleness of life by pronouncing personality a delusion, and Deism can say nothing certain on those questions which most agitate the soul, the religion of the Bible, which makes God so great, makes man great also. He is made in the image of God, a being of power to sway the world ; of a spiritual nature ; of a capacity to apprehend God, and to find his end in God. He is free and responsible ; so that life is a trial, and may have vast results. He is at once a creature of the world, and immortal ; and before this immortal is placed the ideal of a perfect life, and the prospect of an endless progress, if he is true to God and his own soul. But, above all, he has a capacity of loving, to which God lays claim, offering his own love in return, which of itself pre-supposes revelation ; for how can two love one another, and commune with one another, when the character and the feelings of either are unknown ?

Fourthly, we make a particular remark, which shows the attitude which the religion of the Scriptures takes towards the facts of the external world. The Scriptures are wholly unscientific; but nowhere does poetry more embellish and magnify the creation. Now, these strains serve the purpose, not of crushing man, but of inviting him to trust in a greater than the universe. Let me refer, for illustration, to the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, where the sublimest pictures of divine power in the world are at once followed by "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." Thus the greatness of the world reflects the greatness of God; and all this greatness is used as an argument for trust. Man, the feeble, the small, the temporary, as measured by compasses of matter, is drawn to his Maker, as a soul holding communion with him, by his very weakness; and thus the moral quality draws its support from what would naturally strip him of his courage.

But, fifthly, in lieu of every thing else, I mention the advent of Christ as adding glory to the moral system. I am not here to propound in distinct terms a theory of our Lord's nature and work. I prefer to use such general expressions, that many, who may not agree with me in the exact definition of his person, may feel that I do not obtrude on them interpretations of Scripture which will not command their acceptance. It is enough, therefore, for me to say here that he was, according to the New Testament, in intimate and unique communion with the Father; that, by divine appointment, he led a life on earth wonderful in its perfection of virtue; that, by his life and his death, he brought salvation into the world; and

that he founded a kingdom of righteousness which is the highest possible type of human life and society. From him, influences have gone forth to renew the world, to quicken thought, to purify art, to stimulate science. He is the warmest love of his disciples, the source of moral energy, the hope of coming ages.

Whether we can comprehend Christ or not, there is something intellectually great in his gospel. Its starting-points are the soul's worth, and a disturbance of the normal relations between the soul and God, which it seeks to remove by restoring, and even by exalting, human nature. It is intensely moral and intensely religious. In it, truth, love, and holiness find their highest expression. It contains the strongest motives that can act on character. Its relations to man are so manifold, that its materials are exhaustless, and the points at which it touches life numberless. Every one whose life-thoughts are busied with it finds it growing greater and nobler, the longer he contemplates. It is universal: it sways all ages, conditions, forms of society, races of mankind, and stages of the world's progress. And, as its hold on man is due to its facts and revelations, no successor, retaining its influence while undermining its power, can be conceived of. It is for all time. Is there not intellectual greatness in the conception of such a religion?

Such being the genius of Christianity, we claim that it is fitted to govern the world, through the entire intellectual and scientific progress of mankind, by moral influences of perpetual strength. Whatever the glories of the worlds or the majesty of natural law may be, — and may they shine before the next age

with tenfold splendor! — the laws of the moral kingdom, as unfolded by Christianity, are at least as glorious and majestic. If Nature makes man seem small by the contrast of the many to the one, and of the immense to the minute, he is re-assured of his importance when he finds that his welfare and his character are of value enough in God's sight to lead to the mission of his Son. If physical law puts the world in the chains of necessity, the freedom and accountability which the soul is conscious of are yet more enforced by the retributions which the gospel discloses. If society is led by the beneficent applications of natural science to expect its progress chiefly from that source, Christianity points to sin as the leading cause of man's evils (ignorance included), and to deliverance from sin as the condition under which knowledge, and even physical knowledge itself, can best flourish. If Nature in its processes and laws hides God, revelation brightens the ineffaceable idea of God enstamped on the soul. If faith is crippled and lamed by the reign everywhere of natural law, Christianity, a supersensual religion, by its revelations of the invisible, and its promises of the future, and its own spiritual quality, invigorates this noblest power of our nature.

Thus can Christianity restore the equilibrium between physical and moral truth if it be disturbed. Its influences on a worldly and unbelieving age may come chiefly from its practical power; but as soon as it is believed, especially as soon as the recognition of sin in human nature forces its way across the barriers of a fatalistic philosophy, it will be seen and felt in its power as a system of truth.

And now, in closing, may I be allowed to sum up in a few words what I have said? A contest — unnecessary indeed, but actual — is going on for the control of man between two departments of truth, — between the forces that act through knowledge of fixed law in the outward world, and the forces that act through sense of duty, and faith in things unseen. At present, these spiritual forces — putting revealed religion out of the account — are growing relatively weaker, and losing their hold on the human mind; and we are threatened with the singular spectacle of the highest knowledge and grasp of thought within the reach of man, co-existing with an undervaluation of moral forces, and with a weakening of the power of motives that bear on character. Is there any remedy for this? There is a remedy, if the religion of the Bible is to keep its ground in the world; and there is no other. This remedy is seen in the intellectual grandeur of Christianity, in its lofty ideal of character, in the encouragements it holds out to the attainment of this ideal, and in the storehouse of motives with which it acts on the soul. It is not possible that the highest thinking of mankind at the zenith of knowledge will cease to respect this disclosure of the moral Governor of the universe, or cease to confide in the power of Christianity, if believed, to purify character, and so to sustain the highest culture. And, if this be so, Christianity is true; for, as principles verify themselves by bearing the strain of a great variety of circumstances, so an historical religion shows its truth by being equal to the demands of thought and life in all ages.

We end as we began, linking together in harmony the great departments of truth : —

“ The heavens declare the glory of God ; ”

“ The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.”

V.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF LAW.

BY REV. A. P. PEABODY, D.D., PROFESSOR HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

THE sovereignty of law, without limit, interruption, or exception, — a truth dimly seen and imperfectly comprehended in earlier times, — is now proclaimed as the foundation-principle of all sound philosophy of Nature and of mind. As a philosophical dogma, it has indeed been placed in the foreground by some men known as sceptics or unbelievers as to revealed and even natural religion, — by some who have substituted impersonal law for a personal God in the presidency of the universe ; and therefore the religious world has been slow to accept it. But this judging of alleged truths by the character or position of those who maintain them, though almost inevitable with persons of slender culture, is unworthy of the Christian thinker or scholar. It has too often been the reproach of the Church, that her guardians have rejected, without examination, dogmas which they supposed antagonistic to Christianity ; and it must be confessed that the case of Galileo is not an isolated, but a typical case. Such a procedure, under the pretence of strong faith, indicates a weak faith. A Christianity which is endangered by free and full

discussion is not worth defending. Such discussion can only eliminate error, and establish truth ; and, if Christianity be the revelation of absolute and eternal truth, philosophy and science, even when they assume toward it an antagonistic attitude, can be only its ministers and its tributaries.

As regards natural religion, the sovereignty of law is certainly not an atheistic hypothesis, but the contrary. Law implies mind, will, executive force. It cannot by any possibility inhere in brute matter. It cannot be self-originating. Tendency is not law. Tendency cannot check itself ; it can be checked only by other tendencies out of its own sphere ; and it needs to be checked, not at one point, but at every point. Now, in Nature, we see innumerable tendencies, not homogeneous, not proceeding from a common material cause, acting upon one another at innumerable points of contact, yet repressing and limiting one another by rule and measure, — in fine, forces so perfectly balanced, and so entirely normal in their interaction, that their resultant has not essentially varied within historical epochs, and may be in part numerically calculated, and in part predicted in general terms, for all time to come. In a godless world, with organic and vital forces, there would necessarily be antagonistic, clashing tendencies. But whence the co-ordinating law ? whence the balance of forces ? Man's would then be the only intellect in the creation. Within the sphere of his action, he might restrain, co-ordinate, balance : but his scope is infinitesimally small ; his power extends over only a few classes of objects, and over them within a very limited range. Mind, will, alone can impose the metes

and bounds which we see through all Nature, — the law which, as modern philosophy asserts, restrains and harmonizes all conflicting tendencies. If there be not one God, there are as many gods as there are earth-forces and sun-forces and star-forces; and polytheism is an immeasurably more rational hypothesis than atheism: the most superstitious idolater is wise in comparison with him who says, “There is no God.” But the polytheist, with the progress of intelligence, would perceive that his many gods must act concurrently. This the Greek mythology confessed in its Olympian senate, with its virtually omnipotent Zeus, — a system tantamount to monotheism. The reign of law thus implies deity, and unity in the divine counsels and administration.

Conversely, the sovereignty of law is an inevitable inference from the being and attributes of an infinite God. In a God-made and God-governed universe, there can be no room for caprice, for after-thoughts, for empirical remedies, for intervention in unforeseen emergencies, all which imply limitation and imperfection: but Omnipotence must actualize the counsels of Omniscience; an all-embracing Providence must conduct the administration of all Nature and all being in accordance with perfect foreknowledge; not a changeable will, but immutable wisdom, must preside over the march of events, the great and the minute, the movements of worlds, the destinies of empires, the lot of individual man, the sparrow’s flight and fall. Now, all this, and nothing more or else, is implied in the sovereignty of law.

But if it be granted that natural religion not only admits, but even postulates, the sovereignty of law,

does not Christianity assume the opposite ground? Has it not exceptional, abnormal facts in its received history? Does it not, in its teachings, recognize continuous series of exceptional, abnormal experiences on the part of individual men? Miracle, efficient prayer, divine influence on the soul, discriminating providence, — are not all these beyond the outermost verge of law, intrinsically impossible in a law-governed universe, intrinsically incredible to the mind which comprehends the order of that universe, therefore the perishable figments of an unphilosophical age, and even now fading irrevocably from the faith of the vanguard of human progress? This is the question to which the residue of my lecture will be directed.

In the first place, our question does not in any wise concern the opinions that have been held about these facts and doctrines in time past; not even the light in which they were regarded by their first authorized teachers. I do not suppose that the fishermen of Galilee, or even the accomplished and erudite Paul, had any distinct philosophical notions as to what they taught, or even raised the question which we are now discussing; though I doubt not, that, in their conception, the facts of Christ's life and of Christian experience were abnormal. But they were only the better fitted for their work because they had no pronounced philosophy of sacred things: for the capacity of fruitifying faith exists in unnumbered minds that have neither the ability, taste, nor culture requisite for this philosophy; and such minds are best reached by the simple statements which plain, non-philosophizing men may give of accredited facts, and of truths resting

on adequate authority. But if Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul supposed these facts and truths entirely abnormal, this condition of their minds does not in the least invalidate their testimony. In the physical universe, how many undoubted and thoroughly attested facts were regarded as abnormal till within the last or the present century ! Comets, auroral coruscations, meteors, were accurately observed and described many ages before any attempt was made to classify them or to account for them. They were regarded as outside of the order of Nature ; but for this the narratives that describe them are not one whit the less credible. Nor are miracles, the efficacy of prayer, spiritual influence, and the divine providence, any the less credible because the sacred writers may have regarded them as outside of the province of law, exceptional, abnormal.

Before examining separately the relations of these several factors of Christianity to law, it may be well for us to consider how much is included in the reign of law. Does it embrace the material universe alone ? or does it comprehend mind and matter, soul and body, God's immortal children, and the outward objects with which they are conversant ? I know that the latest phasis of physical philosophy ignores the essential distinction between mind and matter, and maintains that thought and feeling are the results of material organization. Yet, even on this hypothesis, the human organism has powers, capacities, and aspirations which distinguish it from all other organisms. Are these distinguishing attributes of man, are human character and destiny, comprehended in the reign of law ? They must be if that reign is universal,

as is both claimed and conceded. Admitting this, we next ask, What is the pervading principle and purpose of the supreme law? for law implies an underlying principle and purpose, else it would not be law. The prime purpose of the law of the universe may be the mere preservation of the order of Nature; or it may be the trial, growth, and perfecting of character. What we call mind or soul may be a mere incident of material development, not specially legislated for; or it may be that to which the whole material creation is ancillary. If the former, then the routine of physical causes and effects is undoubtedly the sole expression of the supreme law, and all events and experiences that fall outside of this routine are impostures or illusions. But if matter exists for the development of mind, soul, character; if the order of what we call the spiritual universe — that is, the realm of ideas, volitions, emotions, hopes, the existence of which the materialist cannot ignore, however he may account for it — holds the primal place in the administration of Nature, — then there may be events and phenomena which cannot be classified under the material laws open to the cognizance of our senses, because they belong to a higher system and a larger cycle; because their causes and their ends appertain to that realm of conscious moral existence, which man, by the essential limitations of his being, cannot comprehend as he comprehends the visible and tangible objects with which he is brought into constant connection. This is the Christian theory; and it seems hardly possible that it should not be the theory of every human being: for how can one be conscious of the power

of boundless mental progress and moral elevation, and not feel that beings thus endowed are immeasurably nearer the Creator, more precious in his sight, and more worthy to be made the primal objects of his supreme and universal law, than myriads of non-sentient worlds could be ?

Let us now consider, with reference to law, some of the individual contents of our Christian faith.

We will examine, first, the relation of miracles to law. It is of no avail for us to underrate the importance of the question of miracles. It is that of the standing or the fall of the Christian Church. It matters, indeed, comparatively little what view is taken as to the office and use of miracles at the present day, — whether they be regarded as peculiarly fitted to arouse the attention and conciliate the belief of men of an earlier age, but partly superseded now by evidence greater than miracle ; or whether we behold in them, as I find myself constrained to do, a self-revelation of the Almighty designed for all ages. But this is certain, — to deny the miracles of the New Testament as facts is to deny the authenticity of the Gospels ; to brand the reported discourses of Jesus, which often recognize his miracles, either as not genuine, or as indicating insanity or imposture ; and to disclaim all certain knowledge of what he was, said, or did. In fine, to reject these miracles is to reject the Gospels as credible narratives ; and, if we still call ourselves Christians, to be Christians in no sense known to human language or history, — to be disciples of a Christ solely of our own fabrication ; therefore our own disciples, not another's.

Now, are these miracles consistent with the sover-

eignty of law? I cannot see that they are not. Whatever be our theory with regard to matter and spirit, it cannot be denied that the most important purpose that is or can be fulfilled in this world is the development and growth, or the restoration and purification, of human character: and, momentous as this purpose seems to us on grounds within our distinct cognizance, it is at least conceivable that it may far transcend in importance aught that is within the scope of our observation; that the characters formed for good or evil in this world are formed for a life beyond the present, — for a life without end. In fine, it is at least a tenable theory, that human beings are immortal souls as well as mortal bodies; that there are thus two orders of existence, — the mortal and the immortal, the material and the spiritual, — occupying the same sphere of being, intimately blended with each other. If so, the spiritual realm must have its laws concurrently with the material. While there are material causes that have their normal consequences, there must be also spiritual causes that have their normal consequences. These two orders of causes must act in the same sphere, and may act at the same moment and on the same objects. If so, the result must differ widely from what it would be were material causes alone at work; as, when a ball is struck by two forces from different directions, it diverges from the route which either of the forces alone would give it. Moreover, as an intensely potent material force may virtually suspend or neutralize a feebler force of its own order, so may spiritual causes, in their very nature of paramount intensity, suspend, overbear, neutralize, at any point of time or

space, material causes, which are confessedly of less intense energy. Thus, under the reign of law, we might expect, on the occurrence of certain conditions, the preponderant action of spiritual causes, even within that material realm which is at the same time the birthplace and nursery of spiritual beings. Events which men need for the nurture or redemption of their higher natures, though out of line with every-day events, may be in entire harmony with universal law, material and spiritual, — in no sense abnormal, but completely normal, only belonging to orderly sequences of cause and effect too recondite to be traced or verified by the senses. As, at transition-epochs of the material universe, new creations have confessedly had birth, and new causes have appeared on the field of action; so may it have been at transition-epochs of human development, — the latter, equally with the former, under the reign of law.

Yet another statement of the case may lead us to the same result. At a certain period every autumn occur meteoric showers. The received hypothesis is, that, in this portion of her orbit, the earth passes through a region overcharged with that same nebulous matter of which our own planet itself consisted when it was “without form, and void.” If so, these meteoric showers, which would be abnormal at any other season of the year, are normal in November. In like manner, we may conceive of this human world of ours as moving on a normal and pre-ordained path, and on that path coming, at certain epochs, into a region of other and higher spiritual attractions, influences, and forces than those to which it is ordinarily subjected. At such periods, there would be

reason to expect phenomena which do not occur at other times, — signs from heaven, and events on the earth, seemingly as abnormal as are the meteoric showers to the unscientific observer, yet to the divine mind, and to higher intelligences, as truly normal as we believe those showers to be. At such periods, powers which do not fall within man's ordinary experience may be normally exerted over external nature. The reign of law is not suspended ; but the world is in its perihelion, or rather its *periouranon*, — its nearest approach to heaven.

But what proof have we that there have been these *periouranon* epochs in the world's history ? I answer, that we have as clear, as patent, as unmistakable proof of such epochs in the past as we have of those facts in the material history of the world on which scientific theories are based. Here it must be borne in mind that natural science rests on natural *history* ; that is, on human testimony, — on the same testimony on which we rely for the facts of man's history. And I know of no law of evidence by which the marvellous stories of geologists and zoölogists should be admitted, and the no more marvellous, and at least equally well-authenticated, stories of the Hebrew historians and the evangelists should be rejected. If we feel constrained so to shape our scientific theories as to embrace and account for the former, we are equally bound to find room in our theories for the latter. It is, indeed, contended that the facts of natural history, though many of them belong in the remote past, admit of verification at the present time. This is indeed true ; but the same thing is equally true of the facts of sacred history.

I will take for my first instance authentic prophecy. This is not a theory, but a fact capable of proof at the present moment; for the antiquity of the prophetic writings, and the condition of the nations about which the prophets wrote, are not dogmas, or matters of conjecture, but items of knowledge beyond dispute. The existence of authentic prophecy in the Hebrew Scriptures can be denied only by being ignored.

While Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, Idumæa, were still rich, strong, and mighty, the Hebrew seers not only foretold their fall and ruin, but wrote specific predictions with regard to their fate, which, within the present century, have been shown to be circumstantially accurate, even in their minutest particulars.

In these same books, the history of the Jewish nation, for the last eighteen centuries, was written in advance as plainly and as accurately as it could be written now. Yet it was, and still is, an entirely unique history,—that of a nation surviving its nationality; scattered, but not absorbed; divided, but not dismembered; disintegrated, but not destroyed; like the bush on Horeb, ever burning, but unconsumed. “I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee; but I will not make a full end of thee.” “I will sift the house of Israel among all nations like as corn is sifted in a sieve; yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.”

These same writers also foretell the advent of a descendant of Abraham, Jacob, Judah, David, who would be despised, rejected, slain, by his own people, yet would establish a reign of truth, righteousness, and piety, which should extend to alien and distant nations, should know no decline, and should

ultimately embrace the whole world. So strong a hold did this prediction obtain upon the Hebrew mind, that, at the Christian era, the entire people was in a blaze of prophetic anticipation. The prescient voice was caught even by Pagan poets and historians; and the great prediction was echoed by the whole civilized world. In Jesus Christ, these prophetic anticipations began to be fulfilled; and the whole history of his Church has been thus far their progressive verification.

Now, but one Mind in the universe can have given voice to history in prophecy; but one Hand can rewrite prophecy in history. Authentic prophecy is, as I have said, a fact capable of ample proof; and the prophetic epochs were *periouranon* epochs. In the Jewish history, they are marked by miracles. Was it not to be expected that they would have been? If there were periods when men saw the future as they could have seen it only by special divine illumination, is it not intrinsically probable that the very order of causes, thus acting on gifted minds, would have wrought also on outward nature, and that their normal, calculable results would have been such phenomena as are not witnessed in the *aphouranon* periods of the world's history?

But while I believe authentic prophecy to be as certain, and as fully attested, as any series of events in history, I would lay still more emphatic and chief stress on the near approach of earth to heaven in the advent and life of Jesus Christ. Laying aside my prepossessions as a Christian, and approaching the undoubted facts of his biography as an impartial student of history, I find in him a being for whose upspring-

ing no spiritual Darwinianism, no development-theory, enables me to account ; whom I cannot co-ordinate with his time or his surroundings. In outward seeming, he was an illiterate peasant, remote from the great centres of intelligence ; a rude provincial, brought up among poor fishermen and carpenters. Yet said he, "Heaven and earth shall pass away ; but my words shall not pass away." And they have not. Children learn them from mothers' lips. Strong men are made strong wholly by them. The afflicted find in them sole and sufficient comfort. They are rehearsed in the ears of the dying. They are said in hope and triumph by the open grave. Do what you will with his biography, — travesty it with Strauss, dislocate it with Renan, use all the power of learning, genius, wit, sarcasm, malice, to distort or dwarf its central figure, — you cannot, by any possibility, bring Jesus Christ down to the level of ordinary humanity, into line with the men of his generation, or even into line with the great men of all times. He still has a name above every name, and you cannot take it away. His is the only character in history which has no secular parallax ; which looks as great in the nineteenth century as in the first.

His, too, was the most potent spirit that ever tenanted a human body. His teachings underlie all our modern civilization, all progress, all philanthropy ; nor is there a maxim in the improved philosophy of life, of society, of commerce, of government, which has not emanated from his gospel, and may not be retranslated, and for the better, into the very words that fell from his lips.

In fine, when we leave out the miraculous element

in his life, and assign to him merely the place in history which an impartial unbeliever would be constrained to admit as rightfully belonging to him on the score of character and influence, he still appears not one of a class, first among his peers, but a class by himself; not unequalled, but unapproached; not brightest among kindred luminaries, but sole sun, in whose rays the stars turn pale.

Now if, in human history, such a personage, and but one such, has existed, it is by no means probable that his normal relations to outward Nature were precisely what ours are. The laws of the universe give man a measure of power over Nature vastly exceeding that of the most advanced among the beasts. If a being so great and good, that, though in human form, he incomparably transcends the greatest and best that have preceded or followed him, has lived on this earth, should we not expect to find that his normal power over Nature exceeded that of common men far more than theirs exceeds that of the brutes? Moreover, did not the presence on the earth of Him, whom those who knew him best regarded as the express image of God, bring the earth for the time so very near heaven, that what else would be prodigies would then have been merely normal events, — just as the meteoric showers, which would be prodigies in February, are normal in November?

I cannot, then, feel that I am denying the reign, or transcending the province, of law, in clinging as I do, with my whole heart and soul, to the miracles said to have preceded, accompanied, and followed the life of Jesus Christ in this world. If he was the personage whom, merely as a student of secular history, I

know him to have been, his heavenly birth-song, his works of power and mercy, the glory of his transfiguration, seem to me only an exterior manifestation, belonging of right, and in accordance with the law of the universe, to a spirit like his. It was as natural that his love should work its whole will among the death-bound, the dying, and the dead, as that ours should remain impotent at the death-bed, the bier, and the grave; as natural that he should rise from the sepulchre as that we should sleep in it.

Let me now state in the fewest possible words the argument which I have attempted to draw out in detail. It is objected to miracles so called (this is not, however, a scriptural term, the word in the Gospels rendered *miracles* meaning simply *signs*), — it is objected that such events cannot have occurred under the reign of law. I answer, that authentic prophecy is an historical fact, and that the sole and unapproached position of Jesus Christ among mankind is equally an historical fact; that these facts, unparalleled in other periods of human history, constitute peculiar and distinguishing features of their respective epochs; and that, under the reign of law, we should expect them to have been attended by external manifestations and events corresponding with them in type, and commensurate with them in dignity and grandeur. The true points at issue are involved in the questions: Has authentic prophecy been written? and, especially, Has Jesus Christ a peculiar and unprecedented place in human history? If these questions, or the latter of the two, must be answered in the affirmative, then, in accordance with what has confessedly taken place at paroxysmal and

transition epochs in the material universe, events out of the line of daily experience were to have been expected in connection with the epochs of prophecy, and especially in connection with the epoch of the theophany, which Jesus was.

From the facts, we now pass to the doctrines, of the Christian record. Let us consider the efficacy of prayer, which is said to be inconsistent with the inexorable reign of law. Here we have, in support of the doctrine in question, facts, — some of them, indeed, entirely subjective, yet certainly credible on the accumulated and unintermitted testimony of those to whose experience they appertain; others open to the observation of all men. Christian consciousness bears witness, with the utmost stress of assurance, not only to the efficacy of prayer, but to an efficacy so closely proportioned to its frequency, persistency, and fervor, as to suggest the idea, not of fortuitous coincidence, but of that uniform relation of cause and effect which we call law. Prayer has been found so certain and efficient a means of neutralizing temptation, transfiguring sorrow, and facilitating arduous duty, that many resort to it with the same confidence with which they would avail themselves of a mechanical force for a material end. Observation, too, so currently associates whatever outward manifestation there can be of the habit of prayer with a pure, virtuous, and useful life, that the beneficent effect of prayer on character is a fact which few will doubt. Now, prayer is either a real transaction of the human spirit with the divine; or else it is a foolish and fanatical process of self-excitation, — a farce, an illusion, a sham. Can the

highest results as to conduct and character proceed from an acted lie, an unreality, a gross and absurd mistake, a stupid blunder? Yes, when the nettle bears figs; and the mushroom, roses.

But does the efficacy of prayer, if admitted, conflict with the reign of law? Does it not rather establish, confirm, complement it? For if we suppose prayer—the highest frame, the loftiest enterprise, of the human soul—to have no consequence in the spiritual universe, we have, then, a cause without an effect, an effort without a result, an aim without an end. All other states and acts of the mind are under the dominion of law. Thought, reflection, analysis, the flight of fancy, the aspirations of all the higher powers of the intellect, have their commensurate revenue. Is prayer alone abnormal? Or is there any thing inconsistent with a law-loving philosophy in those canons of the Christian's faith, "Ask, and ye shall receive;" "Draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh unto you"?

But there is among Christians, it is alleged, a faith in at least the possible efficacy of prayer as to the course of outward events. It should not, however, be forgotten that the uncertainty of a specific answer to prayer for temporal blessings is pre-eminently the Christian doctrine; for our Lord himself has given us his own example in offering such petitions with submission to a higher wisdom: "If it may be, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, Thy will, not mine, be done." And though He, the all-perfect, the best-beloved, prayed thus in agony, the cup passed not from him. St. Paul, too, tells us, that, when he prayed repeatedly for relief from a bodily infirmity which he thought impaired his usefulness, he was not heard in

that he prayed for ; but, as has been the experience of unnumbered Christians, his prayer was answered in the realization of the blessed assurance, " My grace is sufficient for thee ; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Yet these same Scriptures do record instances in which such prayers are said to have been answered, and give us encouragement to offer them.

Now, may not the specific efficacy of prayer for temporal blessings, under certain conditions, be entirely consistent with the reign of law ? Under that reign, industry and enterprise, generally, but not always, receive the specific good they seek. May not the spiritual industry, the heaven-scaling enterprise, of prayer, under that same law, sometimes, though not always, receive the blessing sought ?

It is asked, however, Is it not intrinsically more probable that it is the law (if law there be) of the divine administration, that what is best for man, asked or unasked, is given to him ? This I believe ; and, for this very reason, I will pray in my time of need or solicitude. For may not the spirit in which I pray make that good for me which else were not good, so that, under the immutable law of sovereign love, I may receive, through prayer, the blessing which I shall then own and use aright, — which, unasked, and therefore ungratefully received and used, would be no blessing, and would therefore be, by the same law, withholden ?

We thus see that the Christian doctrine of the efficacy of prayer does not introduce caprice and irregularity into human experience, but is entirely consistent with the sovereignty of law.

The influence of the Divine Spirit upon the soul of man is another doctrine of Christianity which is denied in the name of law. This, however, is claimed as a fact of experience. It was taught even by the more enlightened Pagans; and no Christian ever had a more profound and vital consciousness of the divine influence than Socrates had, if Plato reports him aright. Certainly, too, there have been within our own experience dissuasives from evil, suggestions of duty, preparations for trial, thoughts of peace, foreshinings of the higher life, which could not be traced to external influences, or to laws of association in our own minds, and which the Christian loves to ascribe to the ever-present Spirit of God. In affirming this, do we deny the reign of law? or rather, if there be a God, should we not expect such influences under laws established and administered by him?

The influence of man upon man is subject to law: it is not fortuitous, and capricious in its workings; it is determined by force on the one side, and receptivity on the other; and, in proportion to our knowledge of these factors, it admits of measurement and calculation hardly less precise than our estimate of the operation of chemical agents or mechanical forces. Has God created souls that shall lie open to the influence of any and every spirit but his own? Is it not immeasurably more probable that he has his own avenues and modes of access to every spirit? And, if so, can we not conceive of his influence on man as — no less than the forces of outward Nature — under the sovereign control of law; under unvarying conditions; so ordered as to help, but never super-

sede, free agency; contingent, like man's influence, on the subject's receptivity; flowing in benignantly, though not overpoweringly, on the willing soul; forfeited, in the strong language of Scripture, "grieved," "quenched," by the soul that finds no joy in the loving offices of its Creator and Father?

We see, then, that this whole realm of experience may be as rigidly under the supremacy of law as are the influences of sun and rain on the seed and the harvest-field.

There remains the doctrine of a discretionary Providence, which I cannot omit, though I must treat it with the utmost brevity. It is maintained that the general laws which manifestly govern outward Nature leave no room for the action of the Divine Providence in behalf of individuals. All that needs to be said here is, that the omnipotent God may do, under the reign of law, what man is constantly doing confessedly under the reign of law. I exercise a discretionary providence within a limited scope. I own a field, I will suppose. I may make that field an orchard, a desert, or a wilderness. I am possessed of wealth. I may send with it comfort and joy through a score of else wretched homes; or, by my penuriousness, I may make my own home cheerless and desolate. There is here no infraction of general laws; but I insert my own will so as to make these laws do my bidding. I do not stop or overturn the chariot; but I take the reins, and the wheels move as I would have them move. Can God's power be less than man's? On the other hand, may not man's action upon Nature under law interpret God's action upon Nature under the laws which he has made

supreme, and which he no more transcends than he suffers man to violate them? Man disturbs not the normal relation between cause and effect, or antecedent and consequent: no more does the Divine Providence. But as man, to effect his purposes, so lays hold on the course of Nature as to modify the current of events, yet without deranging the laws of causation; in like manner may the divine will interpose with reference to man's deserts or needs, so that the laws of causation shall be undisturbed, and yet events shall flow in an entirely different channel from that which they would have taken had man's deserts or needs been other than they are.

Yet more: the admission of the doctrine of the divine influence on the soul of man opens still another field for the action of Providence. By the infusion of shaping, guiding, restraining, admonishing thoughts, God may, through the will of individual man, modify his position with reference to the course of events,—the phenomenal world; and though, as I have indicated, I believe much more than this, all that is claimed by Christians as to the controlling agency of the Divine Providence in human affairs might be effected by this action on the minds of men, even were the outward universe under the reign of inflexible laws, never modified from the beginning to the end of time by a discretionary Providence.

I have thus endeavored to show you that Christianity, so far from setting aside the reign of law, is at all points consistent with it. Only it vivifies the cold, mechanical conception of law. It admits the wheels;

but it beholds and adores the Living Spirit in the wheels. It republishes the dictum of philosophy in that sublime utterance which fell from heaven on the ear of the rapt apostle: "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

VI.

MIRACLES.

BY REV. JULIUS H. SEELYE, OF AMHERST COLLEGE.

I TAKE up this book which we call the Bible; and, whether or not I acknowledge its truth, I must at least confess its power. No other book has moved the world as this has done. I inquire into the secret of this, to discover which I am obliged to open the book to see what it contains; and I find in it really but one thought,—a thought, indeed, of incomparable grandeur and of innumerable relations, but which, itself, is as single as it is sublime. All through the Bible, I discover only what is involved in the great thought of redemption. Man's need of redemption, and God's copious provision for it, furnish the wonderful theme of this wonderful book.

Somehow or other, the Bible has convinced men that this thought is true; and it cannot be doubted that here is the secret of its otherwise inexplicable power. Men have been persuaded that an all-sufficient redemption has been freely provided by a sovereign and gracious act of God himself; and the book which contains this announcement, and furnishes the evidence of its truth, is, therefore, glad tidings of great joy unto all people who receive it. Men prize it

and embrace it, and mould their lives according to its precepts, because convinced that its story of redeeming love is true.

What has wrought this conviction? There are two ways in which we become convinced of the truth of any thing, and only two. In one, our minds behold the truth in its own light. The truth is then self-evident, and convinces us by the simple manifestation of itself. We express this conviction when we say that we know a statement to be true. Knowledge is this immediate beholding of the truth; and, when we profess it, we rest in it with an unshaken conviction.

But there are many truths of which we are convinced, but which we do not thus immediately see, and which we cannot thus be said to know. We are convinced that there is such a city as Peking, though we perhaps never saw it; we have no doubt that water is composed of oxygen and hydrogen, though quite likely we never made the experiment and saw the truth for ourselves; we are confident that the differential calculus has solved vast and intricate questions in science, and that the method of quaternions is able to solve many more, though very possibly not one of these problems has ever been worked out by themselves. These truths we accept, not because we behold them in their own light, but because they are affirmed by the competent testimony of those who have thus beheld them. We express this conviction when we say that we believe a statement to be true.

Knowledge and belief do not differ in that the one is a stronger conviction than the other. The conviction may be just as strong of the truth we believe as

of that which we know. We may be no less certain of the existence of Peking, which we, perhaps, never saw, than we are of the existence of Boston, which we, perhaps, see every day. The difference does not relate at all to the strength of the conviction, but wholly to the kind of evidence on which the conviction rests. In knowledge, this evidence is the light of the truth itself as it becomes directly disclosed to the mind. In belief, the evidence is the testimony of another.

A belief may become changed into knowledge. I may believe certain truths of science because scientific men relate them, and I may come to know these same truths through my own experiment or demonstration. The human mind has ever an impulse to know that in which it has believed. The belief is the stepping-stone and the constant stimulus to the increasing knowledge.

In like manner, the knowledge becomes the groundwork of a growing faith. The finite mind can never know all things. Though the sphere of its knowledge be constantly enlarging, the sphere of the unknown appears to grow in an equal degree; as, with a candle in a dark place, the farther the light reaches, the greater the surrounding darkness seems. There will be always, therefore, something for us to believe. We shall always need a voice to come to us out of the darkness, and tell us of the unknown.

Knowledge and belief may be indefinitely blended; but they are the basis of all our convictions. When, therefore, the Bible convinces us of its truth, it must be, either because the truth is known by us in its own light, or because we believe it on the testimony which

declares it. Now, as a matter of fact, we find that the conviction which the Bible does induce is a belief in its truth. It does not come before us, like a book of geometry, with its theorems all demonstrated, so that every principle which it utters may be revealed in its own light to our knowledge ; but it is chiefly a system of faith. It appeals to our belief. Its prime evidence is the testimony of another.

But what sort of testimony is necessary to secure our belief? When one affirms to us a statement which is beyond our knowledge, we believe it just as far, and just as strongly, as we know that he who affirms it is too wise to be mistaken, and too honest to deceive. If we know the perfect wisdom and perfect truthfulness of a person, we believe his word with as strong a conviction as that of any knowledge. The belief always implies some sort of knowledge to rest upon,—some acquaintance with the truth declared, or with him by whom it is declared ; but it conveys to us truths which our knowledge, at the time when we receive them, has no means of reaching.

Now, the knowledge of God is the primal and constant knowledge of any soul. “To know God,” says Jacobi, “and to possess reason, are one and the same thing,—just as not to know God, and be a brute, are the same thing.” This knowledge may be vague and indefinite and obscure in many instances ; yet in every instance is it the original possession and inalienable substance of the human mind : so that, as Cicero says, “There is no one of all men so savage, that his mind is not tinctured by it ;” and, as the Jew Philo says, “He who possesses this knowledge is a man, and he who is destitute of it is no man.”

We know that God is, and that he is all-wise, and cannot lie; and the Bible assumes this knowledge, and rests all its statements upon it, expecting us to receive them because they come from God, whom we know to be so wise that he cannot be mistaken, and so truthful that he will never deceive. Of course, if this foundation is secure, whatever is built upon it must surely stand. If we can only be convinced that God has spoken to us, we can no more doubt the word thus spoken than could the earth have maintained its formlessness and darkness when the Spirit of God brooded over the abyss, and God said, "Let there be light."

The whole question, therefore, hinges exactly here: What is the evidence that God has spoken? How shall we be convinced that the Bible is his word? The question is not, "How shall God flash conviction upon the mind by some self-evidencing statement?" but, "How shall he reveal his own testimony to the truth?" Manifestly, this can only be through some directly spiritual and internal communication, or through some outward and sensible disclosure of God's presence. But a communication wholly internal, while it might be sufficient for the person to whom it is immediately given, would have no power to convince another, and would be liable to the same difficulties as attach to a conviction secured through external and sensible means. These, therefore, must be the methods employed. If God shall ever seek to convince us of the truth by his testimony to it, he will manifest this testimony in a way which the bodily senses can perceive. But this is only to say that he will do it by miracles; for a miracle is noth-

ing more nor less than a manifestation, through the senses, of God's testimony to the truth. A miracle is a sensible event, wrought by God in attestation of the truth. It, therefore, must occur in Nature, and require for its production that which Nature does not possess. It must occur in Nature, otherwise it would not be apprehensible to our senses; and it must, at the same time, be beyond the power of Nature to produce, otherwise it would not disclose an agency which belongs to the Author of Nature alone. A miracle is not simply an extraordinary event, like an eclipse or an earthquake, which, however unfrequent, occurs through the regular action of the same forces that produce the ordinary events in Nature, and which might be foreknown by one acquainted with its cause; but it is an event which Nature, by its own action, never would have brought forth, and for which the power of God alone is adequate. It is no new birth from Nature's teeming womb, but a new beginning, which rises at once from an almighty fiat. It is not a development, but a creation. It is an absolutely new force introduced into Nature, by which Nature is checked and changed. The simplest definition we can give, therefore, of a miracle, is, a counteraction of Nature by the Author of Nature.

Whether such counteractions have ever been wrought; whether this vast and intricate mechanism, the exquisite adjustments and delicate interdependence of all whose parts fill us with unceasing wonder, has ever been changed in any of its workings by a power outside itself, — is the grave and difficult question we must next consider.

In seeking the answer to this inquiry, let us ask, in

the first place, whether there can be a sufficient occasion for such an interference with Nature as a miracle implies. Is such an interference needed to give us any further knowledge of God than Nature discloses? Are not the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, so that men are without excuse? and do we need any thing more? We need nothing more, certainly, to convince us of our obligation and responsibility; for such a conviction all men possess. But, in the actual condition of human nature, what a terrible conviction this is! To know that we ought to do right, and that we have done wrong, and that we are responsible for this to a tribunal of infinite justice, is a knowledge in which the human soul has found an irrepressible and yet unutterable agony. If we fancy that this is the result of some dreadful delusion, and would disappear if men could only come to see that there is no such thing as un-mixed ill, and that "evil is only good in the making;" and that their so-called sin is only a phase of their imperfect development, which advancing thought and culture are sufficient to remove, — we must at least admit that such a fancy contradicts the deepest and most universal convictions of mankind, which we may well be hopeless of attempting in any such way to eradicate. The conviction of sin as a dark and terrible reality occupies a place in the actual human experience, of which it refuses to be dispossessed by any process of argument. The difference between suffering wrong and doing wrong, between the regret for what another has done to us and the remorse for what we ourselves have done, is a difference

which no dialectics can make to disappear, and which the common consciousness of mankind recognizes as a gulf broad and impassable forever. No subtle discriminations nor attempted subterfuges have long cloaked or crowded down this conviction; but it has disclosed itself, through every contrivance to conceal it, as the deepest source of woe which the human soul possesses. No torture of the rack or the stake has equalled the agony which men have actually experienced from the consciousness of sin.

This suffering can only be removed by removing the sin in which it has its source. But how is this possible? To stop sinning causes neither the sin nor the suffering to cease. It is not simply a theory of human nature which justifies this assertion, but the actual facts of human experience, — the darkest, saddest, and yet the most undeniable facts of our history. It is a simple truth of common experience, that a soul conscious of its transgressions does not lose that consciousness by any act of subsequent obedience. The consciousness of sin, however vaguely it may appear in some minds, always discloses a violated divine authority, whose requirements of justice and retribution the understanding and the will can neither stifle nor satisfy. If there be any relief from the misery of sin, it can only come from this violated authority itself; but no knowledge of God which the soul originally possesses, nor any which Nature can furnish, is sufficient to suggest even the possibility of any such relief. Nature adds to that of the human conscience her own testimony of the heinousness of sin. She tells us of the righteousness of punishment, and the inexorableness of law; but, in the myriad voices with

which she speaks of duty and of God, there is no intimation of forgiveness or of love. That God is good, in the sense of desiring the happiness of his creatures, Nature abundantly discloses: but that he can do more than confer upon them the benefits of creation, satisfying one created object by another; that he has a heart which pities, and is willing to pardon, and which yearns to communicate himself—his uncreated and divine fulness—to needy souls, the heavens which declare his glory, and the firmament which showeth his handiwork, the day unto day which uttereth speech, and the night unto night which showeth knowledge of him, nowhere disclose. If God's mercy to sinners be a truth, it is a truth, not of Nature, but of the supernatural world; and it reaches heights of glory in the supernatural which the human intellect has, of itself, no power to ascend.

And the evidence of this, if the proof were wanting, is found in the fact, that the soul, with no other instruction than itself or Nature can furnish, has never attained such knowledge. In all the records of paganism, while the divine power and wisdom and justice, and even beneficence, are clearly declared, no mention is made of the divine love. In the idolatrous sacrifices, in the penances and prayers, of the heathen, there is doubtless indicated some vague idea of propitiation,—some undefined conviction, that, in some such way, God may be approached and pleased. But that God is a being who approaches us before we make any attempt to draw nigh unto him; that he regards us in mercy because of his love, and not for the sake of our good deeds; that he is a God who pardoneth iniquity because he delighteth in mercy,—would seem

to be a thought which the natural heart, uninstructed by any special divine revelation, is unable to attain.

I confess, therefore, to a kind of surprise, when I find certain scholars and cultivated writers of our own time and neighborhood classifying the Bible with the Koran, and the Vedas, and the Zendavesta, and the Five Volumes, to which Confucius and the Chinese appeal. Such a classification, considered simply as a matter of literary criticism, is very superficial, and is creditable neither to the discrimination nor the culture of the writers who make it. The Bible, certainly, stands alone, and immeasurably distant from all other books, in this one grand characteristic, — that its religion is the religion where God is yearning and seeking after man, and where man is invited and entreated and commanded to draw nigh unto God, solely on the ground that God has already come nigh unto man. That God takes the first step in religion, that he begins the work of human restoration and deliverance, nowhere appears till the Christian Scriptures have announced it. What grand and awful visions of divine justice did the old Greek dramatists behold ! What terrors of righteousness and retribution have been heard, in cries of anguish or groans of despair, all over the world ! But who has known that God is gracious, that he can forgive sin, that he loves man, until the Bible has first made the blessed announcement ?

But if this thought, which is the single and peculiar theme of the Bible, be true, can any thing be so important to man as its communication in a manner which shall show its truth to be indisputable ? And if Nature cannot declare it, and the human mind

alone cannot reach it, how is this communication possible, unless directly announced by God himself? And how shall this announcement be proved to be from God, unless he shall irrefutably manifest himself in connection with the utterance? And how can this manifestation be, except through that miraculous interference with Nature already described? If God's mercy to sinners be true, and if this truth shall ever be declared to those who are perishing for lack of it, we may expect the declaration through a miracle.

And now we are to notice, that while the Bible announces this great doctrine of redemption as true, declaring that God has provided a perfect remedy for sin, it also claims to be a miraculous revelation. It professes to prove the doctrine by miracles which furnish God's testimony to its truth. In both the Old Testament and the New, miracles are continually adduced as a motive for faith. The Lord accompanied the call of Moses to deliver his people with a miracle; and, when the faith of the chosen leader was thus elicited and confirmed, miracles were wrought, whose express design, as stated by the Lord himself, was to attest to the children of Israel the divine commission with which Moses was furnished: "That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee." *

Miracles were still further wrought, not only to establish the faith of the Israelites, but to convince the Egyptians themselves: "And the Egyptians shall

* Exod. iv. 5; cf. 8, 9.

know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.” *

After the Israelites had been delivered by miracles, and their faith still staggered, miracles were continued for its confirmation. In announcing these before they took place, Moses says, “Then ye shall know that the Lord hath brought you out from the land of Egypt.” †

When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled, a signal miracle was wrought in special attestation of the divine commission of Moses. The design of the miracle Moses declares, when he says, “Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind.” ‡

When Moses had died, miracles bore witness to the divine authority with which Joshua was invested: “And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know, that as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.” §

When the people of Israel had forsaken the worship of Jehovah, and had gone after the priests of Baal, they were brought back to their former faith by a miracle: “The God that answereth by fire,” said Elijah upon Mount Carmel, “let him be God.” “Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it they fell upon their

* *Exod.* vii. 5; cf. *ib.* ix. 29, and xi. 7.

† *Num.* xvi. 8.

‡ *Exod.* xvi. 6; cf. 7, 8, 12.

§ *Josh.* iii. 7; cf. 10–13.

faces; and they said, The Lord he is the God, the Lord he is the God." *

A prime motive of the miracles of Christ was to convince those who beheld them of his divine authority. When John sent two of his disciples to Christ to say unto him, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see,—the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." † Before healing the sick of the palsy, he says to those around, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house." ‡ At the raising of Lazarus, "Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always; but, because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." § John bore witness unto the truth: but Jesus says, "I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." || "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." ¶

* 1 Kings xviii. 24, 38, 39.

§ John xi. 41, 42.

† Matt. xi. 3-5.

|| John v. 36.

‡ Mark ii. 10, 11.

¶ John x. 37, 38.

A recent writer says, "It does not appear that Jesus aimed to force conviction by miracles;"* but in simple fact, whether we take his own words for it, or the actual impression that his miracles gave, this is the very thing at which he was aiming. "And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?"† In other words, could the true Messiah attest his claims in any stronger way? "Now when he was in Jerusalem, at the passover, in the feast-day, many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did."‡ "Rabbi," said Nicodemus, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."§

The power to work miracles was given to the apostles; and they exercised it also as the proof of their divine commission: "They went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following;"|| "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."¶ Though the miracles may have ceased, they are recorded, that those who did not see them may also find in them a source of faith: "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name."**

We must admit, therefore, that the Bible grounds

* Hedge, Reason in Religion, p. 264.

† John vii. 31.

‡ John ii. 23.

§ John iii. 2.

|| Mark xvi. 20.

¶ Heb. ii. 4.

** John xx. 31.

its claim to our acceptance as a revelation from God upon its miraculous evidence. And as we have seen that this book stands alone in its theme, so we should also notice that it is also and equally peculiar in its miraculous claims. No other book claiming to be a divine revelation has professed to rest upon miracles. In the Koran, Mohammed expressly affirms that God's word to him is, "Thou art commissioned to be a preacher only, and not a worker of miracles." * Various threats and promises are uttered in the Koran to unbelievers and believers; but the motive to faith is declared to lie exclusively in the revelation itself.† Centuries after the death of Mohammed, miracles were related of him; but there is no evidence that he made any pretension to the power of performing them.

Many have a vague notion, that the claim to work miracles belongs to every rude age, and has been urged in support of every superstition; but this is not true. Unnumbered systems of paganism have, indeed, their unnumbered prodigies and signs and miracles; but the systems do not depend upon these. They nowhere profess to do so: on the other hand, the miracles hang upon them. Instead of giving any support to the system to which they belong, they receive all their support from it. Nowhere are they presented as the evidence of a doctrine; but they come forth as the result or appendage of a doctrine already believed. The Bible, however, does not undertake so much to prove its miracles by its doctrines; but it seeks to prove its doctrines, in the first place,

* Koran, Sura, xiii. 8.

† Ibid., vi. 33, 34; x. 20; xiii. 28, 31, 37.

by them. Whether or not this claim be valid, it is at least unique.

We cannot, therefore, exaggerate the importance of miracles in the Christian system. Our belief in that system depends, at last, upon its miraculous evidence. If miracles are impossible or incredible, or cannot be actually proved, then is the Christian system a delusion. The incarnation of Christ, if it ever took place, was a miracle, without which our belief in redemption is impossible. The resurrection of Christ, if it did occur, was certainly a miracle of a stupendous sort: "But if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."*

Thus far, I take it, neither our facts can be ignored, nor the deductions from them disputed. Here is the fact of sin, and the burden of universal sorrow beneath which it buries men. Here is the need of pardon and purity, which Nature cannot give, which man cannot procure, which God alone can furnish, and whose announcement he alone can make through means which shall irrefutably disclose his presence. Here is the Bible, which stands alone among all books in its declaration of God's mercy, and in its adducing of miracles to prove that its declarations are from God, and are therefore true. All this is quite remarkable; but the question still remains, whether the Bible actually gives us evidence enough that its miracles did occur. The occasion was momentous: the need was incalculable. Was the occasion met? Is the need supplied?

To this inquiry the answer is, that, if the miracles

* 1 Cor. xv. 14.

did occur, no evidence of the fact could be better than that which we actually possess. No events in history have a wider and more unequivocal testimony than have these. The miracles were not done in a corner. There was no effort to conceal them. They challenged scrutiny. Though always wrought in proof of the one truth of redemption, they were done in many places, at many times, by different persons, to whom it was given to declare different points or applications of the great theme. They were witnessed by thousands. They were of such a nature, that the beholders could not be mistaken as to whether they did take place. That Christ should walk upon the water; that he should still the storm by a word; that he should raise the dead even where the body had been buried four days; that he should heal the blind, the deaf, the lame, the leper, with a touch, a look, a word; that he should be crucified, dead, and buried, and then rise from the dead, and be seen for forty days by those who had known him most intimately before his death, — can be explained by no jugglery nor deception; and these events must actually have occurred as they are reported, or their reporters have fabricated the stories, knowing them to be false. But why should such a fabrication be attempted? and how was it possible to carry out the deception? The apostles had nothing to gain, but every thing to lose, by such an undertaking. To affirm these stories of their Master was to bring upon them also their Master's fate. Because of their report, the apostles did suffer obloquy, persecution, and death; and, though they must have foreseen this result, they continued their declaration, ceasing not to teach and to preach

that Jesus is the Christ, and that these mighty works were wrought of God through him. Does this look like an attempt to deceive? Is it possible that in all this the apostles were only acting out a lie? Surely this would be only a miracle more astounding than any which they declare.

But more than this: the word of the apostles was believed. It was believed on the very spot where the miracles were declared to have taken place, and by thousands who could have at once disproved the story if it were not true. It was believed by their enemies. The apostles furnished proof of their statements, which no amount of argument or persecution could rebut. The recital found adherents everywhere. The bigoted Jew, the scornful Greek, the proud Roman, acknowledged its force. It won its way in the largest cities of the world. It conquered the chief seats of culture. It took possession of the high places of power. Hardly three centuries from the crucifixion, a disciple of Christ sat upon the throne of the Cæsars, and the world lay at his feet. Now, as the miracles were continually put forth by the early preachers of Christianity as the evidence of its truth, it must have been believed that they occurred. But when we remember how manifest and how numerous and how marvellous the so-called miracles were, and how boldly the apostles proclaimed them, and how constantly they relied upon them, and that the numbers who participated in the scenes described, and who might have disproved the miracles if they had not occurred, must have exceeded the apostles by thousands to one, is it possible that it was all a mistake? This, I say again, would be the greatest miracle of all.

But still further: it does not appear that any one ever ventured to deny the miracles at the time when the apostles were declaring them as the reason why all the world should believe that Jesus is the Christ. Christianity did not meet with an easy reception, though it spread so rapidly. It was opposed on every hand. Persecution was not the only means employed for its overthrow. Learning and philosophy set their forces in array, and sought to demolish it on high intellectual grounds. But, in all that was said in opposition to it during its early history, not a word appears to have been uttered against the reality of its miracles. Every argument was urged which the keenest hostility could suggest; but no one seems to have thought it possible to deny that the miracles took place. But if there had been, at the time, any room for the denial, does any one doubt that it would have been uttered? We must remember that the apostles were preaching an exclusive religion. They were continually declaring that there is no other way of salvation. They set themselves against every form of doctrine, however venerable or dear, which was contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth; and when, in proof of their doctrine, they hold up the miracles everywhere, and no one anywhere attempts to deny them, is it not clear that the evidence for them was felt to be irrefutable?

But there is yet a stronger point. Not only did the opposers of Christianity fail to deny the miracles; they actually admitted them, and have left their testimony to the fact of their occurrence: "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub,"* said the Jewish rulers,

* Matt. ix. 34; Mark iii. 22; Luke xi. 15.

unable to deny the fact of the wonderful work. In like manner, Celsus and Hierocles, and Julian the Apostate, and the Jewish rabbis in the Talmud, — all of whom wrote and argued even bitterly against Christianity, — have yet all left their acknowledgment, which we still possess, of the actual occurrence of these events, which they seek to account for by magical arts; which Celsus affirms Christ must have learned in Egypt, and by which he was able to deceive great multitudes. Are we not entitled to say, therefore, that here is a certainty, if any thing can be certain? These facts thus reported did occur. The great doctrine which the Bible proclaims, it also proves. It is not unmeaning; it is no delusion; it is the great truth of God, that “he so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”†

I have thus far preferred to deal with the question on its positive side, seeking only to discover and declare the exact matter of fact, without reference to

* John iii. 16.

† Heb. ii. 1-4.

any inquiry respecting the antecedent impossibility and incredibility of these events. If it be proved — as I claim must be admitted from the evidence we possess — that miracles have actually taken place, then they are both possible and credible; and any speculative difficulties upon this point must be untenable. But, if untenable, can they not be shown to be thus on speculative grounds? and is this not desirable? I answer affirmatively, and proceed, without reluctance, to the task; though, in doing this, I do not admit that the positive argument in favor of miracles needs aught further than its own statement, clearly apprehended, to compel assent.

I do not think it necessary to dwell upon the objection, considerably urged in some quarters, that a miracle is only a physical fact, and is therefore, at the best, but an argument addressed to the senses, and should not be put forth as a method of convincing the intellect. I am not sure that I understand this objection; for I cannot look upon it from any standpoint which gives it force, except as I shut my eyes to the most open facts of every man's experience. Physical facts, or arguments addressed to the senses, do continually move the intellect of every man. The sunrise is a physical fact; but does it convey nothing more to the intellect of the man who beholds it than it does to the ox? The ocean, the clouds, the stars, the human voice, the face of a friend, the form of a statue, the colors of a painting or a landscape, — all these are physical facts, — arguments addressed to the senses, if one please; but is there no beauty nor truth disclosed through them? and could the disclosure come in any other way?

Neither does it seem necessary to tarry with the objection, that a miracle indicates caprice or vacillation on the part of God. The miracle does not contradict the grand statement of Scripture, that the Lord is of one mind, and "known unto God are all his works from the foundation of the world." It may have been as truly a part of his purpose to produce the miracle as that any natural event should take place; and there is no more difficulty in supposing that something absolutely new should be introduced into Nature, than that Nature itself, as something new, should be introduced, when, "in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

The first objection which I would more particularly consider has been most recently uttered by Mr. Lecky, who, in his somewhat confused "History of European Morals," deems that the Christian miracles had very little to do with the conversion of the Roman Empire, because everybody in those days believed in miracles, and no one attached any special importance to them. They were affixed to the Christian doctrine as a matter of course, just as similar wonders accompanied other recitals; but the inductive philosophy of our time has substituted a critical spirit for the credulity which then prevailed, and we are able to see that the Christian and all other miracles are equally untrue.

Now, it may be that there was a readier acceptance of the supernatural at that period than at the present time; and yet, if we subject this notion to this same critical spirit of advanced modern thought, we fail to find such evidence of its truth as the confident assertion of it would seem to imply. There were sceptics then as well as now. There were railers at

the current notions of divine things, as numerous and as self-confident, then as now. There were the esoteric mysteries, not peculiar to the Greeks, but probably learned by them from the Egyptians, and found also with the Persian magi and the ancient Druids, in which the initiated were permitted to see the irrationalities of the common faith. There were Gorgias and Protagoras and Lucretius and Lucian, who would probably match any of our modern deniers of the supernatural; besides Celsus and Porphyry and Hierocles and Julian, whose earnestness of conviction no modern unbeliever in Christianity will be likely to outdo. Porphyry and Jamblichus wrote lives of Pythagoras, adorned with wonders as marvellous, to say the least, as any recorded in the Gospels; but the age was not sufficiently inclined to the supernatural to receive them with credit. Not every thing wonderful was then believed.

The truth is, that, while the supernatural may be denied by some in every age, it has always proved itself the belief of the great mass of men, and is, perhaps, as prominent at the present as at any time. Counterfeits prove not only the worth, but the currency, of the genuine coin; and the easy and wide spread of the so-called Spiritualism — not to mention other errors illustrating the same — shows that very considerable obstacles still resist the attempt to root out the supernatural from the thoughts of common men.

Now, if there was no importance attached to miracles in the days of the apostles, and if, as no one disputes, Christianity won its way in the face of every opposition, till it conquered a supreme place in the

esteem of the entire civilized world, then how is this latter fact to be accounted for, unless we bring in — though the objector has no thought of introducing it — some superior intrinsic evidence in Christianity itself, by which it was able to convince the world of its truth? Men do not give up cherished convictions, and receive, instead, a doctrine which contradicts all they have previously held, for no cause. Nations do not change their customs and beliefs suddenly, and without any reason. Paganism, in the Roman Empire, did not die without a struggle: how came it to die at all? It employed both persecution and argument to sustain itself: why did it not succeed? To say, as Mr. Lecky does, that it was because of a “disintegration of old religions, and a general thirst for belief,” shows neither the sagacious historian nor philosopher; for the question at once recurs, How did Christianity come to satisfy this general thirst for belief? and how, in this disintegration of old religions, was the new religion able to stand, as though it was the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever? Say what we will, the indisputable fact remains, that paganism in the Roman Empire died because it was supplanted: it lost its sway because a mightier power wrenched the sceptre from its grasp; and, if historians choose to say that miracles were no element of this mightier power, then they are bound to tell us what the elements of it actually were. What is the cause of these prodigious effects? That the fruit is ripe, and ready to drop, does not explain its fall, unless there is some power of gravity to bring it down. That the nations were ready for the gospel; that Christ came, as the Scripture says, “in the fulness of time,” — does not

account for the conversion of the nations, unless they were convinced that he was the living object of their desire. That they were thus convinced is the indisputable fact ; but, if his miracles had no cogency, how could this have been, unless he possessed other and superior means of compelling assent to his claims ? The denial that miracles had any force in the early spread of Christianity obliges one to declare that the gospel has such interior and self-evident proof, that nothing is needful but its own statements to show men that it is divine. I am willing to leave the objector undisturbed in either of these positions. Augustine long ago said, “ If you do not believe the miracles, you must then believe that the world was converted without miracles ; and this would be a miracle.”

Another phase of this same objection relates to the test of a miracle. If we allow that miracles are possible and credible, how shall we distinguish the spurious from the genuine, — the “ lying wonders,” which come “ with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish,”* and the miracles which are wrought and recorded that we might “ believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ” ? If the magicians with their enchantments † did such things as Moses did, why should we not put faith in them as well as in Moses ? And if Simon, the Samaritan sorcerer, ‡ was a man “ to whom all of the city gave heed, from the least unto the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God,” why does not he have as high claims to our regard as does Peter, who denounced him to his face ?

* 2 Thess. ii. 10.

† Exod. vii., viii.

‡ Acts viii. 9, 10.

To this there is a double answer. In the first place, the Bible makes a clear distinction between the two. While it relates the wonders of the magicians and sorcerers, it also relates how these men were confounded by a mightier power than they could wield. Omnipotence is never at their control, and they are furnished with no divine attestation. On the other hand, they are continually met and controlled by what is evidently an almighty power. Still further: the Bible records certain events, which demanded, beyond dispute, God's special interposition. Such were those connected with the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt, by which they were constrained to say, "The Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs and wonders.* On the basis of these miracles, Moses might appeal, as the Bible says he did, to the truth thus revealed, as a standard by which all other doctrines might be tested: "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods which thou hast not known, and let us serve them, thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams."† As though he had said, "God has given, by his miracles, indisputable proof that he is the Lord your God: let no sign nor wonder contradict this; for he never can contradict himself." In like manner, Paul, of whom Christ after his resurrection was seen, "as

* Deut. xxvi. 8.

† Deut. xiii. 1-3.

of one born out of due time,"* might appeal to that resurrection as the all-sufficient voucher for the doctrines which he declared; and might say, as he did to the Galatians, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."† Whether we explain the "lying wonders" as wrought by jugglery, or by bringing into play forces of Nature which only the performers knew, or by a supernatural power of evil which has been able to penetrate the natural world with its hostility to the good, in no case does the Bible fail to furnish the means for a clear discrimination between the two kinds of wonders which it records.

Another answer to this question will also reply to a still broader inquiry, — Why affirm the miracles of the Bible, and deny those related in other books? Are not the healing of a blind man and a cripple by Vespasian, and the print of the nails upon St. Francis, and the wonders performed at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, with unnumbered other incidents of the same sort, facts for which the testimony is clear and ample? and were not these as truly miracles as any which the Scripture records? I do not care here to scrutinize the evidence on which the reports of these marvels rest; though it must be confessed, that in the great majority of the instances adduced, when the evidence is thoroughly sifted, it falls to the ground. But supposing we admit that a blind man was restored to sight, and a cripple to strength, by the touch and word of Vespasian, though Tacitus and

* 1 Cor. xv. 8.

† Gal. i. 8.

Suetonius, the only authorities for the story, differ in their account to a degree, which, if found in the New-Testament writers, would assuredly be said to invalidate their testimony: but waiving this, and supposing it also to be true that the stigmata actually appeared upon the hands and feet of St. Francis, and that extraordinary cures were wrought at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, and that persons have been apparently cured of the scrofula by the touch of a king: the evidence of any thing miraculous, or of a divine interposition for the counteraction of Nature, is still wholly lacking. The science of anthropology discloses many and curious susceptibilities to bodily changes through mental impressions; and, if these marvels happened, they may be illustrations of forces belonging wholly to Nature, and which we as yet but partially apprehend. I deny any thing miraculous in these events, and challenge the objector for his proof; but I affirm the miraculous in those great events to which the Christian Scriptures appeal, and I prove the affirmation by the occasion, the results, and the quality of the events themselves. These events took place, as we have seen, in attestation of a doctrine of incalculable importance for men to know, but whose truth no other means were adequate to disclose. They have, therefore, a sufficient occasion; while the other class has none. Give to these pagan and papal marvels undisputed evidence, and all the significance they claim, and how far does this significance reach?—simply to this, that certain marvels were done, which ended with their doing; which had no results beyond the persons upon whom they were wrought; and which, so far as the pagan wonders are

concerned, did not profess to have. The miracles of the New Testament were not done simply that certain individuals might be saved from certain natural misfortunes; but these natural misfortunes are removed in a supernatural way, in order that not only to these individuals, but to all the world, there may be taught the great doctrine, to wit, "that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."* In reference to these other marvels, we may say of them, as Origen did, "What came of them? In what did they issue? Where is the society which has been founded by their help? What is there in the world's history, which they have helped forward, to show that they lay deep in the mind and counsel of God? The miracles of Moses issued in a Jewish polity: those of the Lord in a Christian Church; whole nations were knit together through their help. What have your boasted Apollonius or Esculapius to show as the fruit of theirs? What traces have they left behind them?"

But the character of the events, as well as their occasion and results, determines their miraculous quality. Take such instances as the raising of Lazarus, or the resurrection of Christ; and to what jugglery or deception, or force of Nature, however hidden, can these events be referred? Nay, do not all our investigations of Nature, all the results of modern science, instead of pointing us to some hitherto undiscovered law of Nature as the sufficient cause of such events, put it beyond all question that no force of Nature

* 2 Cor. v. 19.

could have produced them ? Modern science has, at least, taught us that these events cannot have been natural events ; and we are forced, therefore, to admit their supernatural origin, or, in spite of the evidence in their support, to deny the possibility of their occurrence.

We come, then, to this denial, in which the opposition to miracles, in our time, finds its last stronghold. A miracle, it is said, is impossible ; and, therefore, no amount of testimony, nor any number of men who have believed it, can make me believe it. Nature is fixed and orderly. To change an atom would change all the worlds. To increase or diminish, in the least degree, the exact amount of forces now constituting the universe, would destroy the universe. This introduction of a new force in Nature such as a miracle presupposes is impossible. Forces of Nature may be dissolved and recombined ; but always their exact equivalence will remain. Nothing new can be created, and nothing old destroyed. Moreover, says the objector to the Christian Theist, you prove the existence of your Deity by an appeal to the orderly arrangement of Nature ; but you can only prove your miracle by denying this same orderly arrangement. You build a stairway up to a certain landing-place, and then you maintain this landing-place by destroying the very process which led to it, and the very basis on which it stands. If your faith can rest on such a contradiction, much more may my unbelief. I justify, therefore, my denial of miracles, because they are impossible, and because the interposition of God, which they assume, demands an argument which would destroy the very proof that there is a God.

I have endeavored to state the argument fully and fairly. We should not attempt to maintain what cannot be defended against any and all attacks.

Now, it is not a reply to this objection, to say that a miracle only brings in a higher order of Nature than we had known before, and thus the miracle-worker is only he, who, knowing the event which is going to take place, but of which others are ignorant, takes advantage of his superior wisdom to secure an acknowledgment of his superior power. But this would be no miracle. It would be no communication of God to the soul. Such a view would neither maintain the Christian revelation, nor answer the objection against its miraculous evidence.

Let us meet the objection face to face, and look it in the eye. Stripped of its verbiage, it amounts to this, — a miracle is unreasonable, and therefore impossible. But what do we mean by reasonable and unreasonable? What is this supreme potency, which determines so easily whether aught be possible or impossible? The objector appeals to it most confidently; and so do we, and so do all men. What does it mean? Is it only a word without reality, and with which our thoughts cheat themselves? But, then, how idle all appeals to it must be! and how absurd this very objection becomes! If the reasonable has no reality, the objector to miracles because of their unreasonableness has no reality in the very groundwork of his objection.

But supposing we admit that the reasonable is real, and confine its reality to what an individual man perceives and judges. There is thus no universal standard of reason to which all our perceptions and judg-

ments should conform; but the reasonable is in a man's consciousness alone, and it is unmeaning to talk of it as elsewhere or otherwise. But, if this be so, what folly to talk at all! Why should a man ever say a word if there is no universal standard of reason according to which his words can be judged by another mind as truly as his own? And how does all argument, i.e. every attempt to make others think as we do, fall to the ground, if there is not above and beyond us a standard to which we feel that not only our judgments, but those of every man, should conform! If the reasonable be only what I fancy to be so, I may not, indeed, ask the objector to miracles to relinquish his objections; but just as little may he require me to admit their force. Each man thus stands upon a ground which he can neither maintain against another, nor be forced by another to abandon; and all argument between men is vain, and all agreement among them hopeless.

But if we suppose the reasonable is something real, and has also its reality in some nature of things outside and independent of the individual mind which perceives it, we should then have a standard by which we could measure our individual judgments, and which would enable us to argue with some possibility of agreement. In this view, the reasonable would mean the facts of Nature just as we discover them. I thus go to Nature, and observe what is occurring there; and these occurrences give me all my knowledge. I know nothing about the supernatural; the word has no meaning to me: but Nature is real, and Nature is reasonable; and this is all the reality and all the reasonableness I can know. I find no mira-

cles in Nature, but only an invariable order which makes the thought of a miracle absurd, and the occurrence of a miracle impossible.

Now, this view, in which the unreasonable and the impossible mean only what is unnatural, deserves a close inspection, that we may see its exact quality, and to what results it leads us. If there be nothing reasonable but the facts of Nature, then, of course, nothing can be known beyond these facts; and therefore, whether, beyond these, any thing be possible or impossible, we have no right to say. If the only reason for the order of Nature, as we find it, be, that we actually do thus find it, then we have no right to say that it could never be found otherwise, nor that we ourselves may not find it altogether different to-morrow from what we find it to-day. That a certain fact occurs, is, in itself, no reason why it should occur again; and, if it has occurred a thousand times, this alone gives not the slightest reason for its future repetition. If we know nothing about the causes of the fact; if, as the positive philosophy stoutly affirms, we only know the facts themselves,—then to affirm any thing save what we or competent witnesses have actually observed is a most unwarranted assumption, which, if it be good natural science, is good-for-nothing logic. We have no right to generalize upon such grounds: all that we may do is to hold to the individual phenomena as we have observed them; and, if there are no miracles among these, we can say so; but to deny that miracles are found elsewhere with other phenomena is as idle as for the blind man to deny the existence of colors which he never saw, or the deaf man the harmony which he cannot hear. To

talk about universal laws, and an order of Nature which requires this and requires that, is to renounce the prime postulate of the positive school; and thus these natural philosophers who enter so confidently upon their task of mowing down and clearing up the theological thistle-field dexterously contrive to cut off their own legs with the first movement of their scythe.

The fallacy of the objection might be illustrated, if we could suppose an observer to become acquainted with the force of gravity before there is any light or heat for him to know. Such an observer might become very conversant with Nature as then existing. He might go through the universe, and find one unvarying order binding all things to their centre; but he might not therefore say that any change of this order is impossible. The introduction of light is such a change. Light is the antithesis, the direct opposite, of gravity; but when the Spirit of God brooded over the waters, and God said, "Let there be light," there was light.

If we generalize at all about Nature, and deduce any thing further than the facts which have been actually observed, it is because we recognize that there is something reasonable beneath the facts, which also reaches beyond them, and which, instead of being made by the facts, has itself determined how they shall be made. The objector to miracles begins his objection by denying that there is any such reasonableness: but he is obliged to affirm it before he gets through; and thus his objection rests upon two grounds which flatly contradict each other. In other words, he denies a miracle because it is different from Na-

ture ; but he can only maintain that nothing different from Nature can be by affirming a principle which is itself different from Nature. The objector is attempting to ride two horses, which are proceeding in opposite directions, at the same time, — a feat of gymnastics not easy, certainly, for the performer, however amazing to the lookers-on. His argument is the old fallacy of the undistributed middle in the syllogism. A principle which can form the basis of a universal affirmation, and by which alone one is justified in affirming what is possible and what impossible, is not only beyond and above Nature, and must control Nature, but is recognized as such even by him who denies the supernatural ; or else his denial has no more meaning, even to himself, than the chatter of a parrot or a monkey. “ We must philosophize,” said Aristotle ; “ and if one says we must not philosophize, still, in saying thus, he doth philosophize, and must do so.” We must have the supernatural ; and it is alike the mystery and the majesty of the human soul that we cannot deny the supernatural except in terms which absolutely imply and affirm it.

We take our stand, therefore, on this position, and declare — what the very denial of it implies — that the reasonable is supernatural ; and, on this ground, the objection to miracles we are now considering instantly disappears. It does not profess to have any force except as it denies the supernatural ; and, if this denial fail, the objection fails at once. If there be a reasonableness which is supernatural, then there must be a supernatural Reason who has made Nature, and who is not only its Author, but its Finisher as well, beginning it and consummating it out of his own ful-

ness and for his own glory. Could he make it? and can he not control it? And if it be the sublime truth that God hath "created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord," then what is to hinder such adjustments and interferences with the order of Nature as he may see fit to introduce for the full disclosure and accomplishment of the wondrous plan?

"To many minds," said Plato, "there must come a moral improvement before they can receive any intellectual enlightenment;" and to the minds immersed in Nature, and who boast of their inability to look beyond it, how much need there is of a spiritual insight and quickening! A man's intellect which has shut out the light of the supernatural is like a man's senses who has shut out the light of day. In either case, he walks in darkness. He speculates, perhaps; he inquires about the meaning of things; he explores Nature; he gives us his sciences, which he calls the only positive truth: but he is all the while like a blind man, who feels over with his fingers the form of a statue, or the face of a man, in order to discover thus the beauty and the living soul. Oh for the light! Oh for the opened eye! What a difference would they work at once in all his inquiries and their results! If the blind man could only see, how insignificant would all his discoveries by his fingers seem! And, if the intellect which seeks to shut out the supernatural could only be illumined by its light, how meaningless and dead would be all its movements separate from this!

To a soul which has actually known Jesus Christ as the Saviour of sinners, and found him its light and hope of glory, and opened its eye to the lofty view which he reveals of man, of Nature, and of God, how meagre and unsatisfying seem all speculations which he has not illumined and inspired !

“THE ENTRANCE OF THY WORDS GIVETH LIGHT ; IT GIVETH UNDERSTANDING UNTO THE SIMPLE. MY LIPS SHALL UTTER PRAISE WHEN THOU HAST TAUGHT ME THY STATUTES. THE LAW OF THE LORD IS PERFECT, CONVERTING THE SOUL ; THE TESTIMONY OF THE LORD IS SURE, MAKING WISE THE SIMPLE ; THE STATUTES OF THE LORD ARE RIGHT, REJOICING THE HEART ; THE COMMANDMENT OF THE LORD IS PURE, ENLIGHTENING THE EYES.”

VII.

RATIONALISM.

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AT the threshold of all enlightened investigation of religious truth lies the question, What are the sources of knowledge? On this first and fundamental question, opinion is divided. We may leave out of the account, for the present, the Eastern Church, which has now for a thousand years exhibited few signs of intellectual life, and these mostly in the shape of occasional outbreaks of polemical fervor against its great rival in the West. Proud of its illustrious teachers of the patristic age, — Chrysostom, the Gregories, Basil, Athanasius, — and of those ancient councils which were *truly* called œcumenical, the Greek Church haughtily denies the claim of the Roman bishop to more than a titular and honorary precedence, yet agrees with the Latins in recognizing tradition and church authority. Turning to Western Christendom, we find three parties in reference to the question already stated, — the Roman Catholic, the evangelical Protestant, and the Rationalist.

The Roman Catholic and the Protestant have common ground. They both acknowledge a supernatural, divine revelation. They both admit an authoritative

teaching, objective, or outside of the individual. They both profess that all this teaching, all of Christian truth that has been revealed from heaven, is to be traced back to Christ and his apostles. It is only since the Reformation, to be sure, that the Roman-Catholic Church has thus limited its doctrine of tradition. In the middle ages, tenets were not unfrequently attributed to a post-apostolic revelation. This is done, for example, by Gerson, in the case of the Virgin's Immaculate Conception and the Assumption; and by Occam in regard to the dogma of Transubstantiation. But the prevailing and established theory now is, that the tradition which is the supplement of Scripture includes only apostolic teaching orally transmitted. The Church defines, declares, the faith; discerns more and more of its meaning, but adds nothing to the original deposit. But the Roman Catholic interposes, between the individual and Christ, the Church; that is, the Visible Body organized under the hierarchy of which the Roman bishop is the head. This is the radical, defining characteristic of their system. In keeping with it, the Church is held to be at once the infallible custodian and infallible interpreter of both Scripture and tradition, — the written and the oral teaching of Christ and the apostles. This last position, together with the theory of the Church that underlies it, the Evangelical Protestant rejects. He may allow that the oral teaching of the apostles, if we could get at it, would be as authoritative as their writings; but he denies that any safe and sure channel has been provided for its transmission. And, even as to Scripture, he denies that the Church in any age is an unerring expounder. Hence all that part of

the Roman-Catholic creed which he cannot find confirmed in the Scriptures he discards. Tenets, which, if they claim any support from the Bible, rest on alleged obscure intimations of Scripture, are not admitted to be a part of the Christian faith. There is truth in the well-known aphorism, "The Bible, the Bible, is the religion of Protestants!" It is perfectly consistent with this position to hold that the logical implications of the primitive teaching are more and more unfolded to view in the progress of society; that the ethics of the gospel are developed in new directions and applications; that Christian life is a commentary on Christian truth. We may allow some grains of truth in the mystical and ideal conception of the Church's authority which Möhler and other liberal Catholics have undertaken to set up; but, when all reasonable concessions have been made, there remains a radical antagonism.

The distinguishing note of Rationalism is the rejection of authoritative teaching, the disbelief in supernatural revelation. Whatever special view he may take of the Bible, — whether he adopt the low estimate of Thomas Paine, who said that he could write a better book himself; or the higher estimate of those who pronounce it a lofty product of human genius, — the Rationalist denies that the Bible is in any proper sense the rule of faith. The prophets and apostles teach with no authority that does not belong to them in common with all poets and philosophers and preachers. There is nothing properly miraculous either in the origin of their doctrine, or in the evidences that support it. This is the common ground of Rationalism in all of its various types.

The Atheist, the Pantheist, and the Deist unite in this negation of the supernatural as connected with the origin of Christianity and the Christian system of doctrine.

I am aware, that, in so general a classification, there must be embraced under the term Rationalism dissimilar phases of character and opinion. There are Rationalists in fact, but not in spirit. If there is positive and downright infidelity at one extreme, there is an approach to faith at the other. There are men — a numerous class in these days — who can believe only as they can assimilate religious truth ; who seek for it, therefore, with an earnest heart, though under a cloud of doubt. Could they discern the harmony of Christian truth with their intellectual and moral nature, could they set this truth in a close and vital relation to the soul, they would be satisfied. This immediate, living perception is what they most crave. For such, as we may hope to indicate, there is a way out of their present position. Were the principle of division some other than the one we have chosen, — which is the position taken with reference to the sources of knowledge, — they might fall into a different category ; but, as long as their criterion for judging and ascertaining what is true in religion remains a purely subjective one, they adopt the distinctive rationalistic principle.

Modern scepticism and unbelief, or the whole movement which in its different phases and stages is termed Rationalism, is often charged by Roman-Catholic theologians upon Protestantism. It is unjustly declared to be the legitimate fruit of the Reformation. The ancient foes of Christianity in the

field of thought — Celsus, Lucian, Porphyry, and the rest — were heathen writers, standing outside of the Church. In the mediæval age, scepticism came mostly from the Arabic schools in Spain, and was prevented from gaining a foothold through the efforts of Aquinas and other great teachers of the thirteenth century. But before the Reformation, through the disgust that arose against the scholastic theology, and through the influence of classical and literary studies engendered by the revival of learning, widespread tendencies to scepticism had become rife in the southern nations of Europe. Neander, in an essay read before the Berlin Academy, quotes a remarkable sentence from a letter of Melancthon in which the keen-sighted reformer says that far more serious disturbances (*longe graviores tumultus*) would have ensued had not Luther arisen to turn the studies of men in a new direction. The Reformation was a powerful religious movement, that was strong enough to stifle the germs of scepticism far and wide, and that made itself felt with most wholesome results within the Catholic Church itself. The rise of men like Fénelon and the Jansenists must be ascribed to the indirect agency of the Protestant Revolution; but the humanistic spirit, with the sceptical turn that accompanied it among the Latin nations, continued in France. In the seventeenth century, if Luther's Bible was the popular book in Germany, Plutarch's Lives had a like place in France; and the spirit to which I have referred found expression in the genial scepticism of Montaigne. Without doubt, the decline of religion in the Protestant churches, the incessant controversies among them, and especially the partial

sacrifice of the Protestant spirit of liberty in an excessive zeal for creeds, are partly responsible for the infidel re-action that followed. The Protestant scholasticism of the seventeenth century had an effect like that of the Catholic scholasticism of the fourteenth. But the Deism of the last century found the most welcome reception in France. Voltaire was not bred a Protestant. Owing to causes, among which the degeneracy of Protestantism as compared with the spirit of piety and freedom that belonged to it at the outset was one, Deism obtained a foothold in Germany and England as well as in the Catholic countries. As Neander truly remarks, the spirit that characterized Deism, if logical, and consistent with itself, must lead to the rejection of the supernatural altogether. Pantheism, which identifies God with Nature, is, therefore, the natural successor of Deism; although the forms which Pantheism took were due to the course of philosophical speculation of which they were the immediate product. At the present time, scepticism and unbelief are far from being confined to Protestant lands. Renan is the name most frequently coupled with that of Strauss. Wherever there is intellectual activity in Catholic countries, scepticism, either hidden or avowed, is prevalent. We have seen lately in Spain how the hatred of the ecclesiastical system of the Roman-Catholic Church takes the form of a rejection, and even denunciation, of all revealed religion.

Evangelical Protestantism puts no tyrannical yoke upon reason. It does not concede that any contrariety exists between the Christian faith and reason.

When Augustine affirmed that faith precedes knowledge, he meant that Christianity is a practical system, adapted to practical necessities of the soul, and must, therefore, be applied or experienced before it can be comprehended. It is a case where insight follows upon life; where one must *taste* and see: but that good reasons can be given for the act of Christian consecration in the soul, and good evidence in behalf of the truth that is then received, he, and the schoolmen who followed him in this religious philosophy, fully believed. It was the maxim of Socrates and Plato even, that men must be improved before they can be instructed. Pascal was not a sceptic in his philosophy, as some of his critics have charged: he maintained that faith is reasonable, though not reached by a chain of reasoning; and this because it is an act of the soul, obeying its higher intuitions. Hume, Gibbon, and other free-thinkers of the last century, caricatured the position of Christian theology, when they ironically, with "the grave and temperate irony" which Gibbon says that he learned from "The Provincial Letters," spoke of the truths of religion as received by faith alone, in the absence of, or in the face of, unanswerable arguments. What, then, in the view of the evangelical Protestant, is the place of reason? First, he allows and claims for the human soul a native recognition, however obscure it may have become through sin, of the verities of natural religion, — God, freedom, accountableness, immortality. Secondly, he concedes the necessity of establishing the supernatural origin of the gospel, and of the mission of Christ, by competent evidence. Christ and the apostles, in preaching to Jews, natu-

rally took for granted that groundwork of religious beliefs which was accepted by their hearers. They had only to evince that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. Yet it is remarkable how frequently in the discourses of Christ—how habitually, it might be said—an appeal is made directly to the moral and spiritual nature. How constant is the recognition of those primary convictions which are inwrought into the soul by its Maker! He rebukes men who can predict the weather from signs in the sky for not interpreting aright the signs of the times, and for not deducing from phenomena that fell under their own observation the proper inference; and he adds to this censure the memorable words, “Yea, and why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?” In preaching to the heathen, the apostles argued the case. They set forth the truths of natural religion, which the heathen in part acknowledged; and then they proceeded to establish by testimony the facts of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. It was, throughout, an appeal to the intelligence of their auditors. So it has been since among all considerate defenders of the Christian faith, as the copious library of Apologie will bear witness. Thirdly, it is requisite to investigate the question of the authorship of the books which enter into the canon, wherever honest doubts arise on the subject. The *authority* of the Church on this point a consistent Protestant cannot admit. The Church, as an historical witness, is entitled to speak. The reception, by the early Church, of books as apostolic, is certainly a strong, and in many cases a conclusive, argument in favor of so regarding them; but the Church, like other witnesses,

must submit to be cross-examined. We discard from the Old-Testament canon the so-called apocryphal books, because we know from ancient testimony that they formed no part of the Scriptures that were used by Christ and the apostles, — no part of the Hebrew canon; and we charge the Church of Rome with being uncritical in incorporating them into the Bible, and pronouncing them, as it does in the Creed of Trent, a part of Holy Scripture. Jerome taught the reformers, on this matter, what Augustine with his defective scholarship did not know. But the Protestant is equally bound not to shrink from the investigation of the New-Testament canon whenever he is fairly challenged to this work. Thus in the fourth century, as Eusebius tells us, there were several books in regard to which the Church was divided in opinion; some regarding them as apostolic, and others taking the opposite view. At this time, zeal for uniformity was stronger than zeal for independent study; and the doubtful questions were disposed of without much inquiry. At an earlier day, the state of things was different; for there did not exist in the second century that indifference to the genuineness of books, and ready credulity, which Strauss and many other infidel writers falsely attribute to the early Church. But the Church of the fourth and fifth centuries, on these particular questions to which I have referred, was rather uncritical. Not that the doubt which Eusebius reports is at all conclusive against the books in question; but it is one sufficient reason, if there were no other, why there should be candid and fearless investigation: and so Luther and the first reformers held. For the settlement of

the canon the enlightened Protestant will demand historical testimony, in the shape both of internal evidence and external authentication, of such a nature as to convince the unbiassed judgment. Fourthly, he admits that no amount of evidence can justify belief in propositions that are either self-contradictory, or in conflict with known truth. He admits, that, if such doctrines were to be found in the Bible, it would so far detract from the authority of the book, and might disprove the supernatural origin of the Christian system. But, just here, the evangelical Protestant interposes a protest against the rash, superficial, and sometimes flippant assertion, that doctrines are irrational because they are in some respects mysterious, or because they clash with somebody's scheme of philosophy. There has been an infinite amount of confident but shallow denial of Christian doctrine on grounds which a change in the reigning philosophy renders obsolete. Rationalism may often be left to confute itself. For example, the old Kantian Rationalism, which, in common with the Anglo-French Deism that went before, cast out the doctrines, which, like the Trinity, it could not square with its own preconceived ideas, was, for this very reason, treated by Hegel and his associates of the speculative school with great contempt. The professors who had supposed themselves to have reduced Christianity to a rational system, by eliminating mysteries and trying every thing by the touchstone of common sense, found themselves charged by the more advanced school with a deplorable want of philosophical grasp. Theories of religion and philosophy which are *easy*, which present no hard problems, no unanswered ques-

tions, no vistas that the eye cannot explore, find ready credence for a while; but they are short-lived, because flat and insufficient. A "Christianity not mysterious" can take but a feeble hold of the convictions of men. Fifthly, the evangelical Protestant is free in the interpretation of the Bible. He is bound to no view of a passage simply because it is traditional. Whatever light antiquarian and philological study may throw on the pages of the Bible, he is thankfully to accept. The text, the translation, the exegesis, are fixed by no authority which supersedes the exercise of private judgment. Protestantism, on the one hand, vindicates the importance of learning as an aid in the interpretation of the Scriptures; and, on the other hand, asserts for the humblest individual, provided he be endued with an honest heart, the power of arriving at the general sense of the Bible, and of attaining the knowledge that is requisite for the guidance of life.

The true relation of philosophy to faith, of reason to revelation, it is not difficult to define. Philosophy was styled by Anselm the *ancilla*, or handmaid of religion. The office of philosophy was conceived by the schoolmen to be that of elucidating and establishing the contents of faith. That truth which faith lays hold of, reason demonstrates. This did not, of necessity, imply a degradation of philosophy; since the schoolmen, one and all, held that faith has an independent root of its own in our moral and spiritual nature, and is, in the highest sense, reasonable. But the limited scope allowed to philosophical investigation, without doubt, hampered its development.

With Descartes the new era began. It was recognized that philosophy may and must start with the data of consciousness, and erect its own structure with entire independence ; taking nothing for granted, and borrowing nothing from other branches of knowledge. And here we come to the precise distinction between philosophy and Christian theology, and, by consequence, to the real relations of reason and faith. Christianity is an historical religion. Unlike the philosopher, the theologian proceeds on the basis of historical facts. These facts — the life, miracles, death, resurrection, of Christ — constitute the starting-point of theology. We know that a sound philosophy must harmonize with them, or find room for them, because we know that they are well attested, and truth is not in conflict with itself. When, therefore, a new scheme of philosophy is broached which is incompatible with the Christian faith, we conclude that it must be to that extent false. Yet an inquisitive Christian mind will not be satisfied until it has detected the particular fallacies and errors which enter into such a system : in other words, it will not be satisfied fully until a theoretical has been added to the practical refutation of it. For example, the German philosophers after Kant, inspired largely by Spinoza, brought forward pantheistic systems claiming to solve all problems, and explain the universe. These systems involve the denial of a supernatural revelation, because they deny the supernatural altogether ; and, of course, they rule out the facts of Christianity. This was clearly seen when Strauss applied the Hegelian principles to the discussion of the gospel history, and when Baur did the same with

reference to the origin of Christianity and of the New-Testament writings. It is plain, that when the facts, the reality of which is thus impugned, are established, the philosophy at variance with them is overthrown ; yet the confutation is not radical and complete until the philosopher is met on his own ground, and convicted of unfounded assumptions or reasonings. Then his edifice is subverted from the foundation. The generality of Christians are not called upon to undertake such a work : it belongs to thinking and educated men. There is many a spectre in regard to which the unlearned Christian has a right to say, when it crosses his path, "Thou art a scholar, Horatio : speak to it !"

If Rationalism is taken in the broad sense, in which it is equivalent to disbelief in revelation, it is found in three forms, — Atheism, Pantheism, and Deism ; Atheism being, for the most part, an explicit or disguised Materialism. The critical attacks on the Scriptures, dating from Semler, would form properly a distinct chapter in the history of Rationalism ; yet, as they have sprung from a philosophical principle or bias, they might be placed under the head of Deism or Pantheism. The Rationalistic critics of the school of Kant belong under the former head ; those of the school of Hegel, under the latter. It is not my purpose to treat the subject historically, but to characterize briefly types of Rationalism which now present themselves to observation.

First, there are those systems which utterly deny or ignore the religious nature of man. The most prominent of them is the so-called positive philoso-

phy, in the form in which it was propounded by its founder. Mr. J. S. Mill maintains that either Theism or Atheism may be held in consistency with positivist principles. This position, M. Littré, the leading disciple of Comte, earnestly combats. Comte was an avowed Atheist. This is the proper inference from the doctrines of his system. Religion is declared to be an excrescence upon human nature ; or, rather, it is one of those fancies or delusions which belong to the childhood of the race, and vanish with the development of intelligence. Comte makes the incredible mistake of looking for the prime origin of religion in an effort of the understanding to explain the phenomena of Nature. Religion he makes the result of the personifying instinct, which at the outset endues all things with personal life. The errors involved in his famous generalization, according to which mankind pass through the successive stages of religion, metaphysics, and positivism, have been frequently exposed. We are concerned at this moment with the stupendous mistake which he commits of ignoring the relation which religion has to conscience and the deepest feelings of the soul. One would think that a simple survey of the operation of religion in the world, the mighty power it has exercised in human society, the wide space it fills in human history, would be sufficient to convince a man that it arises from native, profound, ineradicable sentiments and tendencies of the soul. Even the *evil* that religion, when unenlightened, has caused in the world, — the strife and bloodshed and misery, — might teach one that the principle or sentiment from the abuse of which all these baleful effects grow is an indestructi-

ble element of human nature; otherwise the poet would not have had occasion to write the familiar words, —

“Tantum religio potuit suavere malorum.”

Religion is rather to be compared, in the source and extent of its influence, with the social tendency. Some who have called themselves philosophers have said that *society* is artificial; the natural condition of man being that of seclusion and solitude, and social existence being a device to avoid certain inconveniences, and secure certain comforts. This theory, if it ever found serious acceptance, was long ago given up. It is acknowledged that the individual by himself is not complete; that we are naturally, as well as by grace, members one of another. Solitude is, therefore, one of the shortest roads to the mad-house. The marvellous gift of language, the instrument of social intercourse, is the testimony of Nature that we exist for this end; for it is hardly probable that this wonderful power was given us that we might indulge in soliloquies. Place a human being in utter solitude; suppose him to be ignorant that other beings like himself exist: the sense of loneliness, the vague but intense craving for social converse, the deep yearning of his soul, testify that he is out of his element, that he has lost a part of his being. There is a *nisus*, an unfulfilled exertion, a searching, un-resting desire. So it is in respect to religion. The state of man without religion, without God, is similar. Our belief in God does not appear at first in the form of a deduction, in the form of a proposition, but in the form of trust, reverence, fear,

gratitude, supplication, — in the form of dependence and obligation; in the same way that the social instinct makes itself manifest in the child reaching out and groping for another. Psychology is too often defective in failing to state, or even to consider, the propensities of the spiritual nature, on which, after all, human experience and history so much depend. The evidences or arguments for the being of God call out and meet an inward testimony of the soul, of the character which I have indicated. There is an inward *nisus*, as in the eye when in quest of light. There is a gravitating of the soul towards the Being who reveals himself in the consciousness and in the law that is written on the heart. Men like Pascal have been called sceptics, only because they found belief, not on external proofs, but on the intuitions of the spirit.

It cannot be denied that those systems which go under the general designation of Positivism — whether their advocates call Comte their master, or, abjuring him, claim to be followers of Hume, or to follow nobody — have strong affinities, not to say a logical relationship, with Materialism and Atheism. Mr. Herbert Spencer holds to the relativity of knowledge, — the sceptical doctrine which comes down from the sophists, that nothing is known as it is in itself; that is, that nothing is truly known, — and from this false principle he deduces the corollary that God is utterly unknown. What he or it is, it is impossible to say. But religion is the communion of man with a personal Being; and, if God cannot be affirmed to be a person, religion is no more. Mr. Huxley, giving to albumen, the old term for the material substance that

enters into living beings, the sounding name of "protoplasm," avows his belief that what we call the soul is the product of a certain disposition of material molecules. But then "matter" itself is said to be only a name for states of consciousness; and the same is true of "spirit." Matter and spirit are identified in a sort of idealism that denies both, or asserts both to be imaginary. By this unexpected turn, he saves himself from the dogmatic assertion of what Sir William Hamilton likes to call the "dirt-philosophy," — the philosophy, namely, which teaches that the rational soul is made of dirt, or that both are the same in substance. Mr. Huxley professes to build on Hume. He speaks of metaphysics in a tone of supercilious contempt; yet, like the rest of the extreme empirical school, he is unable to find a basis for induction, or any real authority for the generalizations of his own science. He raises the question, How can we predict the future? how can we know from our past experience that the next stone we throw into the air will descend to the earth? Casting away all metaphysical theories, he proceeds to assign two reasons: First, all the stones that have been thrown up have fallen. But the question is, How can we infer from this fact that the same thing will happen? On what ground can we infer the future from the past? Plainly, he does not advance an inch in solving the question. His second ground is equally remarkable: we have no reason to the contrary, but every reason to expect that it will fall; that is to say, we believe that the stone will fall for the reason that there is every reason to expect it will! In this puerile style does our great foe of metaphysics

handle a philosophical question. And yet, in his own department of investigation, he is, doubtless, an able observer and a learned man. Mr. Mill is not so unwary; still, in his opposition to an *à-priori* and spiritual philosophy, and in his zeal for the empirical tendency, he barely saves himself from pronouncing the human mind merely a series of sensations: he offers no explanation of the way in which he can know that any other being exists but himself, and can find no theory of induction which does not involve a plain paralogism.

In the field of history, the empirical school has found a representative in Buckle, — a writer who has dipped into a multitude of books, but brings to his ambitious enterprise no thoroughness of learning in any single department; who starts with the principle, that every new fact is the necessary product of antecedent facts, and that both Providence and free-will are a delusion, and count for nothing. The machinery of physical laws, either material or intellectual, takes the place of personal agency. History is a drama where the actors are automaton, and through which runs no divine plan. All that gives interest and pathos to the story of human affairs vanishes at the touch of this pretentious but contracted philosophy. It is pleasant to hear the masters of historical study on the Continent, as De Tocqueville in France and Droysen in Germany, utter their warm protest against the narrow theory of Buckle, to say nothing of the inaccuracies of his narrative. On both these points, the ultimate verdict of all considerate scholars will be the same.

Secondly, there are those — many of whom are

not to be reckoned under the class last named — who deny the miracles of Christianity. This unbelief must be traced ultimately to a want of faith in a supernatural order. It springs from a lurking scepticism respecting the primal truths of religion, which may yet be received through the force of a traditional impression. But the disbelief in miracles belongs to many who have not abandoned the belief in a personal God, and have no thought of questioning the truth that man has a rational soul. There is a Deistic as well as a Pantheistic infidelity. The Epicurean view of the universe, in which the Deity, though admitted to exist, is kept aloof from the world, and not allowed to concern himself in human affairs, much less to interpose supernaturally, is not wholly banished from the world. The real alternative is Atheism or Pantheism on the one hand, and Christianity on the other; but this is not at once perceived.

That the apostles testified to the miracles recorded in the New Testament, that they could not be deceived, and were not liars, is a position which all the modern assaults of sceptical criticism have left unshaken. The impregnable character of this position is every day becoming more manifest. It was admitted by Strauss, Baur, and their associates, that the apostles testified to the resurrection of Jesus; but Strauss would fain establish the point, that they did not thus testify to the other miracles described in the Gospels. The early date of the synoptical Gospels absolutely precludes the supposition of Strauss. If the resurrection is counted a myth, no possible explanation of the origin of it can be given, unless, at the same

time, it is supposed that the disciples had witnessed such miracles before as would account for their expecting it as a possible and probable event. But, if the prior miracles are credited, there is no longer a motive for seeking to resolve the resurrection into a delusive vision or dream of fancy. Moreover, it is evident that the miracles are so intertwined in the life of Jesus with his words and actions, that no consistent conception of that life, as it went on from day to day, can be formed in case the miracles are excluded. Deny the miracles, and you cannot explain the disciples' belief that Jesus was the Messiah; you cannot explain his own undoubted words in consistency with the hypothesis that he was honest; and you cannot explain the narratives which embody the testimony of eye-witnesses. It is remarkable that the leading advocates of the mythical hypothesis have felt obliged to give up, to a great extent, their favorite theory, and to resort to the hypothesis of a conscious deception by the New-Testament authors, whom they unsuccessfully strive to bring down into an age later than the apostolic. Renan, too, is forced to adopt the notion of a pious fraud on the part of the Founder of Christianity and his chosen disciples, because he cannot escape from the fact of contemporaneous testimony to the miracles, which yet his narrow philosophy cannot allow. It is very characteristic of the whole method and spirit of Renan, that he should require, as an indispensable condition of faith, the performance of miracles at Paris before a council of savans. The moral relations of a miracle, apart from its character as an act of power, he seems utterly to overlook. He might as reasonably ask, that before believing in the

facts recorded by Eusebius of the devoted heroism and endurance of Christian women and children, who, in the Roman persecutions, died for the faith, some persons of like condition should consent to go through the same sufferings before a French commission: not that the evidence by which miracles must be established is the same in kind and degree (this is not the point); but, in both cases, the events are such as occur under the proper moral conditions and surroundings.

It may be said, generally, that, of all the recent writers upon the gospel history, there is no one who makes greater pretensions to critical impartiality than Renan; and yet there is no one who is more obviously under the sway of subjective standards and prepossessions. One of his principal objections to the discourses of Jesus recorded in John is, that they do not suit his taste; which reminds one of the lines which Goethe puts into the mouth of the old Rationalist Bahrdt, —

“Ein Gedanke kommt mir ungefähr, —
So red'te Ich wenn Ich Christus wär'.” *

But even Renan involves himself, by his concessions, in a dilemma, where he is forced either to admit the miracle, or impeach the veracity of the Founder of Christianity and his chosen disciples.

The whole course of sceptical criticism, if attentively followed, is seen to be leading really to the inevitable conclusion, which will be at length extorted from reluctant minds, that the miraculous events

* “Up comes a thought I did not seek, —
If I were Christ, thus would I speak.”

which are set down in the Gospels actually took place.

Thirdly, there are those who admit the historical truth of miracles and the fact of revelation, but deny that the Scriptures are inspired. A distinction is to be made between revelation and inspiration. It is quite possible to hold that Jesus performed miracles, and rose from the dead ; to hold that God, who at sundry times and in divers ways spoke unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son ; and, at the same time, to disbelieve that supernatural guidance was given to the minds of the sacred writers. They were left, it may be said, to comprehend and interpret the revelation by the unaided light of their own understanding. This is not an infidel position : it admits fully the supernatural origin of the gospel ; it allows that the great transactions occurred which constitute the historic basis of revealed religion. God has made himself known to men otherwise than in the stated order of nature ; but the view to which I refer leaves us no authorized interpretation of the facts,—no surety that the prophets and apostles did not mistake their import : it leaves, in a word, no authoritative teaching. Whatever varying forms the doctrine of inspiration may assume from the hyper-orthodox view, that the words are dictated, down through all the grades of opinion, evangelical Protestantism holds and cannot surrender the tenet that the Bible is somehow the rule of faith. There is an objective standard,—not one, if you please, that dispenses with the need of study, of comparing Scripture with Scripture, of considering the circumstances of each writer, of having

regard to the progressive character of the revelation, — but still an objective standard, exalted above the conjectures and speculations of the individual, — a divine testimony, — an umpire to end the strife. Inspiration is the means to this end. Christ told his followers that they would, after his death, understand what they could not comprehend before; they would be guided to a true interpretation of what they could not explain in his life and death; they should be led into all truth in regard to him. He directed them, when they should be arraigned before hostile magistrates, not to hunt up arguments and devise rejoinders, but they should have given them what they should say. Intuition, under the illumination of the Spirit, would supersede contrivance. In short, they were to be, and were qualified to be, competent expositors of the gospel: and their teaching was to have a normal authority; it was to be the supplement and further unfolding of his own divine instruction. Inspiration, therefore, is a truth concerning which the evangelical Protestant cannot be indifferent; it being the source and safeguard of authoritative teaching.

Rationalism, through all of its numerous and conflicting schools, affirms the full competency of the human mind to discover religious truth for itself. Underneath the Rationalistic creed there lies this principal assumption. The great fact that is overlooked is the fact of sin, and the influence of sin upon all parts of human nature. The truth that human nature is not in its normal condition, and that sin has darkened the perceptions of the soul, is avowedly or unconsciously set aside. The Pelagian theory lies at

the root of Rationalism: this lies at the bottom of its denial of the need of external authoritative instruction, of an enlightening and quickening influence upon the mind from without. The consequences that flow respectively from the acknowledgment and the virtual denial of the Christian doctrine of sin can hardly be overstated. This doctrine is the one great postulate of the gospel: "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." It affirms, against Manichæism and Dualism in whatever form, that moral evil belongs to the human, creaturely will, and comes not from the Creator; but, with equal earnestness, it asserts the deep and universal dominion of evil among men. There has been a separation of mankind from God. We behold a state of things which compels us either to deny that evil is, and to call evil good, or to assume a mysterious catastrophe, of which revealed religion itself gives, and professes to give, but an imperfect explanation. But, whatever mysteries hang over the origin of sin, two things are certain: one is our personal responsibility for what we are in character, — a responsibility to which conscience, the highest witness, clearly testifies; the other is the baleful effect of sin, not only on society, not only on the pursuits and purposes of the individual, but also on the spiritual perceptions. It is a department where the bent of the will affects the perception of the intellect; where mind and heart share a common disaster. How is it possible to look abroad on the world, and see what men are, even when placed under the most favorable conditions; to review the course of history, and notice what men have done, — their conduct to one another, their governments, their literature, their amusements,

their social customs, their religions even, — how is it possible for one to look within himself, and interrogate his own soul, and not acknowledge this great fact of sin, — acknowledge that a malady has infected mankind, differing from any other disease only in this, that it emanates from the will, and involves guilt? How is it possible to ignore a fact which all deep-thinking men, heathen or Christian, have united in deploring, — a fact which Seneca declares almost in the language of Paul? The human mind, as an organ for the discernment of God and divine things, is not in the condition in which it would be had sin not perverted its powers. Vague and doubtful apprehensions need to be enlivened and confirmed by the voice of One who speaks as one having authority. It is not truth alone that the human soul needs, but redemption through One who is himself the truth. But communications of truth respecting God, and our relations to him, will form an essential part of the process which has for its end the restoration of men to communion with God.

The Pelagian view of things appears, at the first glance, to be the easiest. It avoids a number of very difficult questions which theology has not yet succeeded, and perhaps never will succeed, in solving. The trouble is, that it omits to recognize or take into the account vast facts which force themselves upon observation at every turn. How well has it been said that sin is the one mystery that makes every thing else plain! Superficial views on the subject of sin, where the views are not absolutely false and anti-Christian, lie at the foundation of most of the current infidel theories. A truly profound and just view of

this subject is the one grand corrective. Every system of Pantheism assumes, and must assume, what the healthy moral sense of every man denounces as a falsehood, — that the entire course of this world is normal, and conformed to the ideal; that baseness and perfidy, and every form of selfishness, are well, and even divine, in their place. It is no wonder that Spinoza and Hegel betray some uneasiness at what are the necessary ethical implications of their systems. Every system of Deism likewise assumes that man is able, without aid from above, to acquaint himself, as fully as he needs, with God, and to deliver himself from the yoke of evil. The Author of revelation says the whole truth in a word, “Thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help.”

Let full justice be done to the position of the Rationalist: his doctrine, in the most refined form, is that of the supremacy of reason and the moral sense. There is force and plausibility in the statement; but let one consideration be noted. Suppose that I am driven to the admission that reason and the moral sense within me are not quenched, but perverted and obscured; and suppose that, in Christ, I recognize one in whom, being sinless, reason and the moral sense are clear and perfect, so that his eye sees moral truth with an infallible discernment; suppose that my conviction of his superiority in this respect is deepened with every day's contemplation of his character and teaching, and that, the more I assume the temper of a disciple, the more is my moral sense quickened and clarified through contact with his spirit: why shall I not recognize him as the authority, in this province, of morals and religion? In this act of trust, do I not estab-

lish, rather than subvert, the supremacy of reason and conscience? Be it remembered, also, that this relation to Christ is not one that supplants the exercise of my intelligence and moral sense; but it is one that rectifies, and at the same time constantly develops, elevates, and educates, these powers of the soul. We call him Lord and Master; and so he is: but he does not call us servants, but rather friends; for all things that are made known to him he reveals to us. The relation of dependence is ever turning into that of fellowship and friendship, of sympathy and personal insight.

Let a man discern the surpassing excellence of Christ, and the germ of faith is within him. Remember that there is an order among things to be believed. You are conscious of sin and moral weakness; you have lost that filial relation to God which is the birth-right of human nature: but you are struck with the perfect excellence of Christ as he is described in the Gospels. Here is a character that more than fills out your highest conception of nobleness and virtue; here is One whose filial communion with God sin has never broken. This character of Christ is the witness to its own reality. It is no product of imagination: the records that exhibit it could never have been framed by invention. But how about the supernatural facts of the history? They, too, are upheld by the power of this human, and yet superhuman, excellence. You feel that the works of Christ are no more wonderful than his words and his life, and that he himself is the greatest wonder of all. Who but he can be the Reconciler? Whose hand can I take but his? But he proposes to bring us out of our separation from God, and rescue us from the fate which sin has

brought upon human nature. He is at once the instrument and the first example of redemption ; for in his own person, having overcome sin, he overcomes death. He is the power of life to all who come to him, infusing into them his own holiness and peace, re-connecting them with God, saving them from death. It is a legitimate progress, then, from the first living perception of the excellence of Christ to a personal trust in him as the Saviour, and to a discernment, also, of the inner rationality of the method of redemption. Difficulties respecting this or that portion of the Bible may be left to take care of themselves, provided they are not obstacles in the way of a practical acquaintance with Christ. Even the Bible is not to be interposed between the soul and Christ. He was preached and believed in before the New Testament was written, and to those who knew little or nothing of the Old. Salvation is by faith in him. Believing in him, we stand on safe ground, from which all questions, even such as relate to the Scriptures themselves, may be studied. No loyal disciple need fear the displeasure of his Master on account of intellectual difficulties which he is doing his best to solve.

It should not be overlooked that Christianity is more than theory or precept : it is fact ; it is a great act of love and sacrifice, — an act of God himself. For this reason, it can never be thought out by an *à-priori* process, or brought under the category of necessary truth. As sin can never be explained in the sense of being reduced under the category of cause and effect, like a physical event, for the reason that sin is a free act, so it is with redemption. In its very na-

ture it is historical : hence philosophy can never bring it into a chain of necessary conceptions. Christianity is something which reason does not evolve out of itself, but which must be received like any other great historical transaction in which free-will plays the essential part.

In dealing with Rationalism, let it be observed that it is vain, as well as wrong, to attempt to check the freedom of investigation in any province of knowledge. In regard to the beautiful sciences of Nature, the rapid progress of which is a leading characteristic of the present age, this remark is especially pertinent. Let the investigation of second causes in Nature be carried as far as possible, and let there be no hinderance put in its way. A jealousy on the part of students and ministers of the gospel with reference to these branches of study is equally unmanly and futile. At the same time, it deserves to be remarked, that, just now, the tendency to speculation is more rife among physical philosophers than among metaphysicians ; and theories of Nature are brought forward which have a very slender basis of facts to rest upon, and which evince a wide departure from the Baconian method. Those philosophers must not be tenderly sensitive if their theories are subjected to a rigid criticism by theologians, who, to say the least, are, equally with them, trained to habits of logical analysis. We must be excused for not showing the deference to guesses that is properly paid to established truth. Again : it is unjust to charge the clergy and theologians with a standing opposition to new discoveries in physical science. It would be strange

if the Christian Church, which has educated the European nations, reduced their languages to writing, founded their schools and universities, saved the ark of learning in the midst of a deluge of barbarism, were to be found uniformly an obstacle in the path of scientific progress. The fact is, that almost all new discoveries which subvert traditional opinions are looked upon at the outset with distrust, and meet with opposition. This opposition is far from being peculiar to theologians, even in the case of physical discovery. Resistance often comes from the men of science themselves. Galileo, the old example of ecclesiastical intolerance, had his contest to wage with them. There was the scientific professor at Padua, who could not be induced to look through the glass, and see the moons of Jupiter. Why is not more eloquence expended against the narrowness and bigotry of scientific men themselves in respect to new truth in their own department? And, if so much progress is claimed for the physical branches, why may not some progress be permitted in the understanding of the Bible from age to age? Once more it must be said, that the natural and physical sciences, beautiful and useful as they are, often claim, just at present, a higher relative place on the scale of studies than justly belongs to them. The study of matter, even the study of living beings below man, and of his material organism, must ever stand in respect to dignity, as an instrument of culture, second to the studies that relate to the mind. "The proper study of mankind is man." Man, and the products of his activity, — language, history, literature, art, — are the grand, fructifying studies. The

opposite view must be withstood, because it can only prevail in alliance with materialistic tendencies and influences. The study of material Nature is lauded as being an observation of the thoughts of God, and an examination of his works, instead of the works of man. But the human mind is the great work of God, being his image. More is to be learned from the mind of Shakspeare, concerning God its Creator, than can be gathered from the astronomic system, — infinitely more. We would not disparage physical studies; let them be encouraged, fostered, cultivated, to the utmost: but there are loftier, more inspiring, more edifying branches of study than these. The natural and physical sciences do their best work in the way of mental culture when they are pursued by men who bring to the study of Nature an ideal element that flows into the mind from other fountains. Humboldt, though not belonging to the first order of genius, and not to be compared with men like Kepler, Newton, and Leibnitz, is, nevertheless, an example of the warming and widening influence of literary studies upon a devotee of science. He caught something from the genius of his brother, who was probably the abler man of the two.

But Rationalism must be met in the field of argument. To this end, apart from the intrinsic interest and value of these studies, the physical sciences must be so far pursued by the student of the gospel as to qualify him to judge of the theories and deductions that bear closely on natural and revealed religion. The two classes of scholars need to know more of one another, and of the wide fields of research in which, respectively, each of them is most at home. Then the

naturalist will not ignore the vast range of facts and data that do not lie within his own circle, and a like benefit will accrue to the theologian.

The theologian must not set his face against new truth in his own branch. Revelation is complete, but not our understanding of it. Let us not mistake the outpost for the citadel. Let us not imagine that the Christian faith is imperilled by every proposed modification of received opinions. The effect of historical, philological, and scientific study, is to bring out in bolder relief the human element in the Holy Scriptures. It is more and more felt that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." If the result is, that traditional formulas are somewhat altered, and new statements must be framed in their place, let it not be supposed that all, or that any thing, truly valuable, is lost. Be it ever remembered that "the letter killeth; the spirit giveth life." Much may be conceded, respecting the Bible, that was once denied; and yet it is left an infallible and sufficient rule of faith. There is a power in the Bible to quicken the soul; to meet our deepest necessities; to satisfy us when all other sources of wisdom and comfort fail; "to find us," as Coleridge has aptly expressed it: and this power, made manifest in all ages, and among all conditions of men, is the evidence of its divine origin, and a pledge, that, whatever peculiarities indicative of its human origin likewise may come to light, it will never lose its hold upon mankind. A good way to make infidels of sharp-sighted and thoughtful men is to identify the truth of the gospel with untenable formulas respecting the Scriptures; to make, for example, Christianity stand or fall with the exactness of

a genealogical table. Richard Baxter felt this, even in his day. Never was there a louder call for the utmost candor and fairness in dealing with the difficulties and objections of inquiring minds, whose perplexities find little relief in much of the current and traditional teaching. Where there is no settled hostility to the Christian faith, an irenical, conciliatory spirit on the side of its defenders is eminently called for. "Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good," is the motto for the times. It was a Church father — Tertullian, I believe — who said that it was tradition that nailed Christ to the cross.

Nevertheless, the tenor of the foregoing remarks will prevent surprise at the observation, that the most effective antidote to the influence of Rationalism is found in direct appeals to the moral and spiritual nature. There is a testimony within, if it can only be called forth. Sometimes the inward witness is awakened by the experiences of life. Robert Hall said that he buried his materialism in the grave of his father. But another providential agent for effecting this result is the prophet's voice. Men are raised up in sceptical times when the higher spiritual nature of men seems dormant, and when the understanding has taken the throne of reason, — men whose office it is to appeal with a direct and vivifying power to the intuitive function of the spirit. Among the heathen, this work was done by Socrates, in opposition to the Sophists. He taught men to find within themselves, in their own moral intuitions, a certainty which nothing could shake. In modern times, in Germany, when a barren Rationalism had paralyzed faith, it was

Schleiermacher who recalled men to religion. The high privilege was given him to awaken his contemporaries to a sense of the indestructible character and sacred authority of religion. His errors, whatever they may have been, should never prevent us from recognizing the greatness of the service which he rendered. There is no truly earnest preacher, who speaks from a living experience, who is not carrying forward an effective war against Rationalism. Robertson of Brighton, referring to the cry of John the Baptist to the Pharisees and Sadducees, "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" raises the question, how such words could be addressed with any hope to Sadducees, who did not believe in a wrath to come, or in any life hereafter. But, says the preacher, when they heard the prophet say, "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" they knew that there was a wrath to come. There are responsive chords in the soul, which the truth, when simply asserted with the earnestness of a living conviction, sets in vibration. Arguments are sometimes necessary and useful; but they may be superfluous, and even harmful. A striking statement that brings truth in direct contact with the spirit, a declaration that comes from insight and experience, may do what reasoning fails to accomplish. A single utterance, which I call, for the want of an equally expressive term, prophetic, will sometimes dissipate doubt in a moment, and develop a conviction which intellectual inquiry alone might never awaken.

In Germany, it was an orthodox Rationalism that paved the way for the heterodox. Theologians took

their propositions from the creed, or reasoned them out by processes of logic, but forgot to set them in a living relation to the wants and aspirations of the soul; or they dwelt on the ethical side of the gospel, to the neglect of the properly religious elements, in which the originality and power of Christianity chiefly reside. Let not the lesson be lost upon us, who are going through an experience not unlike that through which Germany has, in a sense, already passed.

There is one final test to which irreligious as well as religious systems are subject; and that is, their influence on society. The Christian religion is the life-blood of the social body. That gone, decay and moral death inevitably follow. Jesus called his followers "the salt of the earth," "the light of the world." They were the light of the world because he is the Light of the world, and their light is kindled from him. Let Materialism prevail, and, as surely as effects follow causes, the appetites of sense and earthly passions will gain an undisputed ascendancy, and overturn at last the social fabric. Let a less gross form of Rationalism supplant faith in the verities of the gospel, and a like appalling result will ultimately, though it may be with closer pace, ensue. History unites with reason in teaching, that, when the restraints and incentives that flow from religion are lost, there is no power adequate to control the selfish propensities that demand indulgence. If men are made to believe that they are merely animals, they will, in the end, behave like the brutes. If they are persuaded that they are destitute of a free and responsible nature, they will act without a conscience. If they reject the truth of a righteous moral govern-

ment, they will sin without fear. If the religion of Christ is treated as a human invention, the regenerating power that lies in the gospel is wanting. By this last stern test, every irreligious and anti-Christian system which is not otherwise overcome must be tried. Supernatural Christianity has been tried as a reformatory agent in millions of individuals, and in society at large. We know what the gospel can do when it is cordially received. We are not ignorant of what may be expected if Atheism, or Pantheism, or a Christless Deism, should prevail. The fate of the civilized heathen nations of antiquity is instructive: so is the history of modern nations which have given themselves up to infidelity. Apart from argument, there remains, then, the great test of experience, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

VIII.

FROM LESSING TO SCHLEIERMACHER, OR FROM RATIONALISM TO FAITH.

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RATIONALISM is something more than a revolt from external authority: it is, in its higher forms at least, a craving for reality, a demand for personal conviction, a perception that truth should become an immediate possession of the mind, and that religion should be vital and practical. Hence its contempt for cant, its dislike of creeds, its indifference to ecclesiastical institutions and usages; and hence, in part, its attitude toward the Scriptures. Hence, also, its critical spirit, its earnest scrutiny of evidence, its exacting claim to present and self-attesting proofs. Formal arguments do not satisfy it when principles are to be established. Religion it esteems too sacred and vital a thing to be made dependent on experiences and records of the past. Revelation is continuous. It needs no mediation of miracle or message.

“Science was Faith once: Faith were Science now,
Would she but lay her bow and arrow by
And arm her with the weapons of the time.”

All of the historical religions have contained rudiments of truth. Human thought, deriving information from every source of knowledge, must now frame its creed by selecting elements to be found in every religion, and carrying them on to perfection. Jesus is still our best teacher ; yet he is not himself the subject and substance of Christian doctrine ; nor is Christianity, as identified with his person and work, supreme and final : still less can such authority be ascribed to the Scriptures.

This higher species of Rationalism — which has had many representatives abroad — appears among us at the present time, invested with peculiar attractiveness and power. It arrests attention by its novelty. It affiliates with culture. It infuses itself into much of our popular literature. It has at ready command the grace and charm of poetry, the arts of fiction, the swift-winged and arrowy essay. It rallies in its interest the enemies of Philistinism. Its power is with men of letters, and over the young, — over those especially whose education is highest ; but what they receive will be largely the thought of the next generation. Many are captivated by it who would only be repelled by Materialism or bald Pantheism.

In order that what is erroneous in this higher Rationalism may be overcome, what is true and legitimate must be accepted. So long as, by any exclusiveness or narrowness of other systems, the human and religious interest which it guards is not secured, it has a relative right to exist. Its influence is fairly won. Partial error — error, that is, which contains an element of truth — can only be corrected and removed by a larger and more complete way of thinking.

We shall come closer to this species of Rationalism, and deal with it more fairly, by studying it in the character and writings of one of its best and most influential representatives.

I have selected for this purpose the works of a man of another country than our own, and of another century; but, in the great movements of thought, national distinctions are of minor account, and the circling tides strike different shores at different hours. This is, in the opinion of some among us, Lessing's hour here. "At present," says a well-known American critic, — one worthy to wear Lessing's generous mantle, — "at present, the world has advanced to where Lessing stood; while the Church has done its best to stand stock-still." We will go back, then, a century, to Lessing; but we will advance, also, to Schleiermacher. Perhaps we shall find, that, if the world is now only up with Lessing, the Church that honors Schleiermacher was, even a generation ago, at least a generation in advance of the world as it is to-day. May it be, rather, that from both of these illustrious men we may derive some higher skill in the culture of whatsoever things are the trusts and the prizes of a manly life, and are of immortal worth!

Lessing's writings which entitle him to a place in the history of religious and theological thought belong to the last years of his life, when, in consequence of publishing extracts from a manuscript work of a German Deist, he was drawn into controversy, as he says, by the hair. From early youth, however, his thoughts busied themselves with religious themes. He was born in 1729, the eldest son of a Lutheran pastor; and received a pious training, with the cher-

ished hope that he would become a minister of the Word. His youth, and indeed his life, fell into the time when free-thinking, or Illuminism, was in the ascendancy. In the preceding century, Descartes and Leibnitz had attempted to carry human thought back to first principles. "That is true which I clearly and distinctly perceive," said Descartes. The measure of truth for us is clearness.* Leibnitz expanded this into two principles: That is true which is not self-contradictory, and for which a sufficient reason can be given. This philosophy was elaborated into a system, and applied to theology, by Christian Wolf, whom Lessing accuses of badly understanding his master. It sought to do what Pascal saw so clearly could not be done, — make moral truth "geometrically convincing." The truth of religion was to be formally demonstrated. Every chance for doubt was to be logically excluded. That must be accepted as true which is clear and self-consistent. Some lines quoted by Dr. Kahnis show how this method was appreciated:—

"God said, 'The sun shall be,'
And a world came into sight;
God said, 'Let Wolfius be,'
And in all souls there was light."

Wolf recognized two sources of knowledge, — reason and Scripture; but every thing finally turns upon reason, with its logical principles. The result was, that the ideas of religion as a life of the soul in communion with God, of faith as the evidence of

* Kahnis, *History of German Protestantism*, p. 27, ff.

things unseen, of the testimony of the Spirit, dropped out even of theology; and with them went all those doctrines, cherished in the Church from the beginning, which imply personal and immediate relations between the human spirit and the divine. A preacher who held to the ancient faith, at the time when Berlin was the focus of this Illuminism, preached to his hearers "On those things of which the people of Berlin know nothing." His enumeration embraced all that is distinctive in the doctrines of Christianity and in spiritual religion. Even personal existence was established in the use of the syllogism. But whoever, as Prof. Tholuck says, needs the syllogism to convince himself of his own existence, is unfit for the kingdom of God.

It would lead me too far away to follow the course of this Philosophy, or to notice its alliance with Deism, or its issue, in the degradation of all higher truths in philosophy and art, as well as in ethics and religion, to mere matters of probability. God became, at last, simply a probable hypothesis. The ground of right action was found in its utility. The clergy "were useful for getting up tables of population, and for enforcing royal edicts, such as for the extirpation of locusts," and for preaching sermons on "nature, morality, agriculture, and the cow-pox." Tendencies are shown by extreme cases. Lessing's life, as I have said, fell into the time when this Illuminism and the Popular Philosophy had full sway. His intimate friends were among its chiefs. He was always, however, superior to the movement in which they were engaged. So far as it was an attack upon bigotry and intolerance, he seconded it; but some of his sharpest sayings were pointed against its superficiality

and dogmatism. Illuminism, for instance, frowned upon enthusiasm. Lessing recognized in feeling, and in feeling mounting to enthusiasm, an original source of the finest representations of the artist and the philosopher. It is a mine and treasure of rich ideas, a delightful elevation for wider observations, the acme and bloom of all fine arts and sciences. Feeling, too, he regarded as the foundation, the primary seat, of religious ideas, though these must be subjected to the tests of reflection. Religion, he says, has far higher ends than the mere promotion of morality. It presupposes morality, and elevates the honest man to higher insight and knowledge.

The Popular Philosophy rejected the doctrine of the Trinity as absurd. Lessing defended it as the most philosophical representation of the Divine Nature. A preacher in Charlottenburg wrote a work entitled "An Apology for Socrates," in which he attacked, on rational grounds, the idea of eternal punishment. Lessing published, in partial reply, a manuscript of Leibnitz, with comments of his own, closing with the words, "O my friends! why should we wish to appear more acute than Leibnitz, more philanthropic than Socrates?" Illuminism sought to banish mysteries from revelation. It is rather, said Lessing, "a proof of the truth of revelation, if reason finds in it truths which exceed reason. Whoever despoils his religion of such truths has as good as none; for what is a revelation which reveals nothing?" The advocates of sound common sense ridiculed the old theology: it was, in their view, a mass of nonsense. "I know nothing," wrote Lessing, "which has so exercised and manifested human acute-

ness. A botchwork of ignoramuses and half-philosophers is that system which assumes to put itself in the place of the old." "Under the pretext of making us rational Christians, they are making us, in the highest degree, irrational philosophers." "There are profound geniuses among us, who flatly and frigidly philosophize religion away, that they may weave in their own philosophical system." And the whole scheme of rational Christianity, obtained through a selection, by common sense, of truths from every source open to it and approved by it, he dismissed with the comment, "Pity is it that one knows neither where Reason sits in it, nor Christianity!"

For orthodoxy, Lessing, it is evident, had more respect than for heterodoxy; yet he broke with this too. Orthodoxy, before his day, had quarrelled with Pietism, which survived chiefly among the Moravians. It had thus divorced faith and science. Lessing defended Moravianism, as he did Lutheranism, from special attacks; but his masculine common sense, his sharp analytic understanding, was not content with a faith incapable of intellectual verification, any more than his religious sense was met by a mere religion of the understanding. He attempted, in an independent way, to verify for himself what is authentic in Christianity. This endeavor, with its results, we will spend a few moments in sketching.

As early as his twenty-first year, he wrote to his father, "Time shall show whether he is the better Christian who has the principles of Christian doctrine in his memory, and often, without understanding them, in his mouth, goes to church, joins in all the

ceremonies because they are customary ; or he who has once wisely doubted, and, through the way of investigation, has arrived at conviction, or at least has striven to arrive there. The Christian religion is not a thing which one should take from his parents on trust and faith. Most people, it is true, inherit it, just as they do their property ; but they show by their conduct what righteous Christians they are. So long as I do not see that one of the chief commandments of Christianity, to love one's enemies, is not better observed, so long I doubt whether those are Christians who give themselves out as such."

A few years later, we find him earnestly studying, together with the writings of Spinoza, the works of the Church fathers and the early history of Christianity. A few sentences taken from a posthumous essay illustrate the spirit in which he conducted these inquiries : "Enter upon this examination, I say to myself, like an honest man. See everywhere with thine own eyes. Disfigure nothing ; palliate nothing. As the consequences flow, so let them flow. Neither check the stream, nor divert it." * With the same intellectual conscientiousness, he appears to have read largely on the evidences of Christianity. That he availed himself, in these studies, of all the aids within his reach, is more than questionable. His habits of life were, to say the least, not friendly to investigations, where not only the intellectual and moral, but the spiritual faculties must be exercised, if truth is to be reached. But these were not made sufficient account of by either party in the controversy as then conduct-

* Lessing's Works, Lachmann's ed., xi. 1, p. 88.

ed. Of his method of reading, and its result, Lessing has left this vivid sketch:—

“The better part of my life—happily, or unhappily?—fell into a time when writings in behalf of the truth of the Christian religion were to a degree fashionable. . . . What wonder, then, that I could not rest until I could possess and devour every new production in this department! . . . I sought just as greedily every new publication against religion, and gave it the same patient, impartial hearing which I believed to be due to the writings for religion. So it remained a long time. I was torn from one side to the other: neither contented me wholly. . . . The more urgent the writers on both sides were, . . . the more I seemed to perceive that the effect which each produced upon me was not at all that which he should have made after his own way. . . . The more conclusively the one would prove Christianity for me, the more doubtful I became; the more courageously and triumphantly the other would trample it to the ground, so much the more inclined was I to maintain it, at least in my heart.

“This could not result from a mere antiperistasis, —from the natural counteraction of the soul when forced to alter its position. The reason, consequently, must lie in the way in which each defended his cause.” *

This explanation cannot, I think, be rejected. The argument on each side proceeded on the theory, that the first step in the process of securing religious faith is an intellectual conviction that the Scriptures are the word of God. An underlying postulate, common

to both parties, was, that human reason — that is, the logical faculty, the understanding, which analyzes and arranges and reasons upon the phenomena of Nature — is the sole arbiter in this controversy. Christianity was attacked in the name of sound common sense : it was defended under the same auspices. The rejoinder met the challenge ; and much cheap criticism upon the Christian Apologies of the last century would be saved, if those who make it would consider more carefully what was then the state of the question. Common sense, it was successfully shown, cannot overthrow religion ; it cannot set aside Christianity, either in its doctrines or its historical evidences ; but neither can it discover to us the ultimate basis of religion in general, nor give us assurance respecting the divine origin of Christianity. Lessing asked for a proof of Spirit and Power : but the theology of his day had accepted the Deistic conception of God and the Rationalistic theory of belief ; it had no place in its system for an immediate relation of God to the human mind. Faith was regarded in its principle as a conviction of the understanding by evidence. The evidence is historical testimony : on this rests inspiration. Inspiration guarantees the Scriptures ; and the Bible is a code of laws, — an external rule for the government of belief and conduct. Christianity thus became, at most, a scheme of moral government, the evidences of whose divine authority are all such as men of sound sense can judge of just as they weigh and decide upon matters of everyday interest and concern. The result is a balance of probabilities. A careless student at one of our New-England colleges was asked by his professor, “ What

are the chances that there is a moral government of the world?" Not being familiar with the text-book, and being suddenly thrown upon his own resources, he replied spontaneously, "A hundred to one, sir!" An able critic of the Apologetics which makes every thing thus turn upon probabilities has summed up the argument of the last century for Christianity less favorably: "There are three chances to one for revelation, and only two against it." This is unjust; but it is an injustice which indicates a defect in the defences brought out in the Deistic controversy. The effect on Lessing's mind may be learned from his own testimony in a letter to his friend Ebert: "With the *pro* and the *contra* concerning religion, I am utterly satiated (*habe ich eines so satt, wie das andre*): write, rather, of carved gems; you will then do little good, to be sure, but also little harm." It is but just to say, again, that those who pursued the line of argument to which I have alluded, considering the matter historically, won the day. Never has a powerful dissent like that of Deism and Illuminism been more effectually extinguished. But the controversy was not thereby ended. The conflicts of this century bring to light the unsettled problems, the questions, almost unopened and unvexed then, which lie behind the discussions of the last century. They meet in one question: What is the ultimate basis of religious certainty? Is it an historical basis, or a spiritual one, or both? and, if so, what are the relations of the two grounds of faith?

Lessing's scepticism foreshadows these inquiries. When he was proposed as a member of the Berlin Academy of Sciences, objection was made to his election, that no one knew under what title to choose him.

He stands, in many respects, alone in his age. He left no matured system, either of criticism, or philosophy, or religious belief. His life was one of restless questionings. Yet, from three of his maturest writings, we may learn what was positive in his convictions, and to what his thinking pointed.

One of these works is the dramatic poem, "Nathan the Wise."* "Nathan's disposition towards all positive religion has always been my own,"† is Lessing's comment upon it. The story of the three rings, the germ and centre of the poem, thus becomes an exposition of the poet's own opinion.

"In gray antiquity, there lived a man
In Eastern lands who had received a ring
Of priceless worth from a beloved hand.
Its stone, an opal, flashed a hundred colors,
And had the secret power of giving favor,
In sight of God and man, to him who wore it
With a believing heart."

This ring, descending from son to son, came to one, the sire of three; of whom all three were equally obedient, and equally beloved. At length the father must die, and is sorely perplexed to whom to leave the ring. He devises this expedient. Two other rings are made, the perfect patterns of the original. Each son thus receives a ring with the paternal blessing. The father is scarcely dead, when each son claims, by virtue of his ring, the headship. Appeal is made to law. The judge reasons, that, since the true ring is said to possess the magic power of making its wearer loved of God and man, this must decide.

* Translated by Miss Frothingham.

† Works, xi. 2, 163.

If neither has this power, the genuine ring is lost ; all are counterfeits. If one is genuine, then its possessor will receive the love of his two brothers. The judge dismisses them accordingly, with this counsel in place of a decision : —

“ Accept the case exactly as it stands.
 Had each his ring directly from his father,
 Let each believe his own is genuine.
 Let each one
 With the others vie to bring to light
 The virtue of the stone within his ring ;
 Let gentleness, a hearty love of peace,
 Beneficence, and perfect trust in God,
 Come to its help : then, if the jewel’s power
 Among your children’s children be revealed,
 I bid you, in a thousand thousand years,
 Again before this bar.”

The story is in part a beautiful and Christian comment on Jesus’ words, “ By their fruits ye shall know them.” But something more than this is the author’s intent. The true religion, he teaches, is now indistinguishable in respect to its grounds and authority. It cannot be identified with the faith of the Jew, or the Mussulman, or the Christian. No one can decide that either of the historical religions is the one genuine faith. Christianity is one of these historical religions. As such, it ranks with others, and can claim no other precedence than that approved by its effects. The final faith of man will be a brotherhood. But now the genuine ring is not with certainty to be known. Says Nathan, —

“ The genuine ring was not to be distinguished, —
 As undistinguishable as with us
 The true religion.”

“But,” replies the Saladin, “the religions are plain to be distinguished, — e’en in the dress, e’en in the food and drink.”

“In all,” rejoins Nathan, —

“In all except the grounds on which they rest.
Are they not founded all on history,
Traditional or written? History
Can be accepted only upon trust.”

Lessing’s view of Christianity is still more definitely set before us in another work, which also falls into the closing period of his life, — the essay “On the Education of the Human Race.”* Here, as in the story of the rings, he takes up a Christian idea too much neglected in his day: it is that of a divine guidance and control of human history, through which mankind is training for a state of perfection, — an apologetic thought which Origen used with effect in his reply to Celsus.

In Lessing’s hands the argument is so shaped, that revelation is resolved into education, and education becomes simply an enlightenment of the human intellect. Christ, accordingly, takes his place among the teachers of mankind. He was the first trustworthy, practical teacher of the immortality of the soul. It was also reserved for him alone to recommend inward purity of heart, with a view to another life. His teaching was worthy of confidence, on account of the prophecies which seemed to be fulfilled in him; on account of the miracles which he performed; on account of his own resurrection from the dead, with

* Most of this essay is given in Rev. Dr. Hedge’s *Prose-Writers of Germany*.

which he sealed his doctrine. It is not necessary that we should be able to demonstrate the occurrence of these supernatural events. They may have been necessary, originally, to secure the reception of his doctrine; but they are no longer necessary to secure the understanding of his doctrine now. Revelation is education. Education gives man nothing which he might not have had from himself: it simply gives him that which he might have had from himself, — only more rapidly and more easily. So revelation gives mankind nothing to which the human reason, left to itself, might not also have attained; but it gave and gives them what is most important sooner. The Bible is the elementary book in human education. Christian doctrines are truths of reason revealed in order that they may be more firmly grounded and more rapidly diffused. At the time when they were revealed, they were not truths of reason; but they were revealed in order that they may become so.

What illumination of reason was granted, in Lessing's opinion, to the great teachers of mankind, is not made clear. If revelation simply makes known what human reason is adequate to develop, some men may have been raised up whose intellectual power far surpassed that of their contemporaries; and what, through them, was matter of revelation to others, was to themselves an intuition or deduction or conclusion of reason. Special revelation does not, therefore, in this scheme, necessarily imply any thing strictly supernatural. The wise man, Lessing seems to think, will leave this undecided. It is a matter of *pro* and *contra*, — of balance of evidence.

This brings us to Lessing's view of that portion of

the evidences of Christianity in which the disputants of his day lodged the properly supernatural testimony to Christianity, — the argument from miracles and prophecy.

An opponent, professedly following Origen, had applied Paul's phrase, "demonstration of the Spirit and of power," to the evidence from fulfilments of predictions, and from miracles. The remaining treatise of Lessing to which I will call attention bears this title, "On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power."

He begins with distinguishing between an immediate and a mediate evidence that a miracle has been wrought or a prophecy accomplished. The first exists for me when I myself witness the event; the second, when I know of it historically; that is, through the testimony of others. In respect to the Christian miracles, and the prophecies fulfilled in the Messiah, we have evidence of the latter kind. We have, in other words, reports of miracles and prophecies. These reports, Lessing concedes, are as authentic and trustworthy as any historical truths. But he asks, "If they are *only* as trustworthy, why, in use, are they treated as though they were infinitely more trustworthy?"

"And how so? Thus: Entirely different and greater things are built upon them than we are authorized to build upon truths that are only historically proved. If no historical truth can be demonstrated, nothing can be demonstrated through historical truths; that is, *accidental truths of history can never be the proof of necessary truths of reason.*"

We have seen that Lessing resolved Christianity into truths of reason. He now says *historical testi-*

mony cannot establish *necessary truths*; i.e., Christianity.

He then, proceeding, considers what it is to credit historical truth. It is simply to accept it as true, to have nothing to object to it, to admit its connection with other truths of the same sort, and to use it as a means of estimating their value. In this way, a man believes that Alexander lived, and conquered almost all Asia. Yet it is possible that there is invention and exaggeration in the reports. They are not a basis on which may be founded any thing of great and lasting importance whose loss could not be made good.

"If I have nothing to object," he asks, "to the historical fact that Christ resuscitated a dead man, must I therefore deem it true that God has a Son consubstantial with himself? In what connection does my inability to offer any weighty objection to the testimony to the one fact stand with my obligation to believe that against which my reason strives? If I have nothing historically to object to this, that Christ himself is risen from the dead, must I therefore accept it as true that this risen Christ was the Son of God?"

"That Christ, against whose resurrection I can raise, historically, no important objection, on account of this gave himself out to be the Son of God; that his disciples, for this reason, so esteemed him, — this I readily and heartily believe; for these truths, as truths of one and the same class, follow naturally one upon the other.

"But to spring now with that historical truth to an entirely different class of truths, . . . and to require me to conform to it all my fundamental ideas

of the nature of the Godhead, — if this is not a *μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος*, I know not what Aristotle meant by this phrase.

“It is said, to be sure, that Christ, of whom it is historically proved that he awoke the dead, and rose from the dead, himself said that God has a Son of like nature with himself, and that he is that Son.

“That were all right, were it not that the fact that Christ said this is likewise only historically certain.

“Is it replied, . . . Inspired writers guarantee it, who cannot err? So is this, alas! only historically certain, that these writers of history were inspired, and could not err.

“This, this,” he adds, “is the foul, broad ditch over which I cannot get, often and earnestly as I have attempted the leap. Can any one help me over, let him do it: I beseech him; I adjure him. He deserves from me a divine reward.”

“I know not,” Dr. Pusey has remarked, “any man whose scepticism gives one more pain, excites more regret, than that of Lessing. His works manifest a conscientious desire after truth, — a struggle to extricate himself from his difficulties.” He craved a religion in which he could find personal assurance of its divine origin and power, and one that could rule in the sphere of morals, and control human conduct; in a word, a religion of love. He found no such ground of assurance in the Apologetics of his day; and no fruitfulness, nothing genial and humane, in the dry, scholastic forms which Dogmatics had assumed. He revolted from both. He broke not only with Illuminism and the Popular Philosophy, not only with the withered orthodoxism of his gen-

eration, but with the orthodoxy of the Christian centuries, and with Christianity itself. Yet, from a remarkable paper found among his manuscripts after his decease, it would seem that a way of escape from his difficulties may, in his later years, have begun to open to him.

“I have nothing,” he writes in these private notes, “against the Christian religion. I am much more its friend, and will remain through life its well-wisher and adherent. It answers the purpose of a positive religion as well as any other. I believe it, and hold it true, so far and so strictly as one can believe and hold true any thing whatever that is historical; for I can by no means gainsay it in its historical proofs. I can oppose to the testimonies which are adduced for it no others, — either because no others have existed, or because all such have been destroyed or intentionally invalidated: it is immaterial which. . . .

“With this explanation, I must think, might at least those theologians be satisfied who lower all Christian faith to human assent, and will know of no inward supernatural working of the Holy Ghost. For the satisfaction of others who still accept such an influence, I add, that I hold their opinion, at all events, to be the one better grounded in the Christian system, and to be the traditional opinion from the beginning of Christianity. It is one which can scarcely be refuted through a merely philosophical argument. I cannot deny the possibility of the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit, and certainly do nothing knowingly which might hinder this possibility from becoming reality.

“To be sure, must I confess” * —

Here the fragment breaks off.

The scientific appropriation and use of this Scriptural and Christian doctrine of Immediateness was not made in Lessing's day. Practically, it was achieving immense results in Moravianism and in the rise and progress of Methodism, — results which will prove, to any who study them impartially and intelligently, that there are experiences of the human soul which the Philosophy of Common Sense, which Illuminism and Deism and Positivism, are too narrow to contain. But this great movement was outside of the schools of learning, and in Germany, at least, failed to purify them. It numbered among its leaders no men “gifted with the philosophical faculty.”

Such a spirit appeared in Frederick Schleiermacher. Born into a Christian family, and trained in a Moravian seminary, he became a founder of the University of Berlin, the head of its theological faculty, preacher to the university, a member of the Academy of Sciences, and the mainspring and centre of a philosophical and religious activity so varied and potent, that Neander dates from it a new era in the history of theology. Like Lessing, he was always a seeker after truth. He abhorred “professoring,” and never aspired to form a school or a sect. He simply wore his heart on his sleeve, and allowed men to see it. He simply declared the truth which he really believed, and why he believed it, and what he was sure was its beneficent power. His individuality was as marked as Lessing's; but, with as keen

* Lachmann, xi. 2, 404.

an intellect, he had a larger love. He found the truth, which he proclaimed with something like a prophet's power, through strenuous conflict. He took up into his own thinking the doubts of his age as they affected men of culture. He did not overcome them all. He gave up some things which had to be fetched back. He undervalued what is historically given, as others had made too little of what is immediate. He admitted a certain one-sidedness in his way of thinking; for it was his instinct to lean, when the boat tipped, to the opposite side. He speculated even on his death-bed: but his profoundest speculative thoughts did not disturb his religious feeling; rather, as he said, they were identical with it. His repose of mind was as remarkable as its versatility and its restless, rationalistic activity; and, in the end, his Christian faith became as serene and stable as a star, and as full of light. It is not necessary to my purpose, as time would not allow, that I should pause to sketch his career. It will suffice to bring to view (1) the principle by which most effectively he influenced his age, and overcame the scepticism of many of its most cultivated minds; and then (2), under the guidance of this principle, attempt to trace the path from Rationalism to Faith.

This principle is, in a word, that of Immediateness. More fully stated, it is this: The soul is created for divine communion, and, in this communion, attains to religious certainty. Religious certainty is ultimately a certainty of life. It is not logical or inferential, but immediate. Until there is this primary experience, doubt is not and cannot be overcome. The funda-

mental fact, the real basis, of religious knowledge, of Christian science, is still wanting. There may be the quiescent certainty imparted by education; there may be the confidence secured by accepted testimony; there may be conviction by argument; there may be the certainty that a duty is urgent: but neither of these forms of certainty expels doubt. This may arise at any point, so long as there is not a personal, immediate relation of the soul to God and the security thus obtained. Without it, religion sinks to morality; history becomes at most a record of past incomings of supernatural forces, which, as no longer present, are soon questioned, and then denied; the Scriptures are regarded as antiquated; and Christianity itself, as a merely historical religion, takes its place more and more among the things that were. This principle, as Lessing saw, is enshrined in the Christian Scriptures. Piety has always accepted it. Schleiermacher helped to give it its due place in Christian science. He brings it to view in a threefold relation: first, to God as revealed in creation, or in the natural consciousness of men; secondly, to Christ as revealed in the consciousness of believers in him; and, thirdly, as harmonizing the antagonism between Naturalism and Supernaturalism, Rationalism and Faith. In a few words, I will indicate what is of chief importance for our purpose in respect to each of these points.

1. In "The Discourses on Religion addressed to the Educated among its Despisers," — a work by which Schleiermacher first powerfully influenced the thought of his time, — he treats religion as a fact of psychology, which men who claim to cultivate science are

bound to accept and appreciate. He reminds them of moments of existence in which they had been conscious of movements and determinations of being which could not be embraced in any merely utilitarian or ethical or logical scheme of human nature. There is in man a sense of the Infinite, the Eternal, the absolutely Perfect. Every man has a religious nature. Here is the invisible paradise. Let him accept this. Then is he prepared to inquire how this nature may be cultivated.

In a later work, this universal religious nature is shown to involve a primal bond between the soul and its Creator. Religion, he argues, is not knowledge nor action, but the consciousness of ourselves as absolutely dependent upon God. It is an original or primary consciousness, and therefore antecedent to reflection or reasoning; it is the basis of all reflective religious knowledge and action; it is the deepest spring of spiritual life. At this point enters into human history a divine element. Man would be a mutilated, incomplete work of God, were this relation to his Maker not established. This higher consciousness should influence all other departments of our being, and relations of our lives. Thinking is pious thinking when we realize our dependence on the Divine Wisdom. Action is religious activity when accompanied by this same feeling of dependence. Piety is a sense of God as our Creator, Sustainer, Governor, Father: it is a fact of consciousness; a primary fact, which, as it does not spring either from reasoning or education, cannot be reasoned nor educated away. Religion is independent of science or philosophy. All true science goes back to an immediate knowledge:

so does the science of religion. God is not an hypothesis any more than is matter or the soul. In respect to the existence of each as the foundation of all science, there is a knowledge which is an immediate certainty.*

Deism had sundered God and man. Pantheism had lost the right distinction. The philosophy of Kant had left no psychological basis for religious life. Even orthodoxy, or rather the orthodoxism which Lessing encountered, had advanced simply an intellectual theory of religion. An intuitionist theory had gone farther, but had not escaped the vortex of a merely intellectual system: it rested in ideas, eternal truths, in reason, not in God. Schleiermacher's teaching prompts to a more thorough inquiry. What, we may ask, is the genesis of intuitions? How do they arise? By education and tradition? But who taught the teachers? By reasoning?—all reasoning implies them. By experience?—what sort of experience?—experience of the finite with a logical jump to the infinite? A broader gulf than Lessing shuddered at is thus left unbridged.

Man's religious history and religious nature—the most thorough and scientific analysis of his being—bring us alike to a primary consciousness in which God and the soul stand face to face. Men may deny this; for men are not always manly: scientists may ignore this; but they do not always reason scientifically: human conduct may belie it; but Milton's

* It must be acknowledged that Schleiermacher himself made too little account of the intellectual element in this primary consciousness, and that his system becomes thus too predominantly subjective. His best followers have recognized, and endeavored to remedy, this defect.

picture of a spirit slumbering on the sea of fire has its real counterparts.

2. This general religious consciousness assumes a specific form under the influence of Christianity. Every thing in Christianity, says Schleiermacher, has reference to the redemption accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth. By this test, Christianity is distinguished from all other religions: it alone is the religion of the cross, of redemption.

In the Christian consciousness or experience, every thing centres in the redemption effected by Christ.

Christian apologetics or evidences, criticism, theology, science,—all start from and return to this point. The Christian piety is faith. This, when perfected, is an inward certainty of redemption. It is not a transient feeling, nor an inference; it is not a mere state of the will or the affections; it is a determination of the soul which implies and reveals a Determiner; it is a consciousness, not only of redemption, but of a Redeemer,—a primary and fundamental consciousness in which is involved a certain knowledge of the saving and divine power of Christ.—It implies an objective testimony of the Spirit of Christ. Schleiermacher thus arched the gulf to which Lessing came. The historical evidence sets Christ before us: faith brings him within us. He by his Spirit, by his own redemptive activity, gives an assurance of his divine reality and power. From this assured ground rises the whole structure of Christian science. In the dialectical process which follows, there may be innumerable uncertainties, as in any other science; but the science of Christian truth has the same sure basis of certainty which that of ethics has, or any physical

science,—it rests on an immediate knowledge, a fact of life.

3. And thus is overcome the antagonism of Lessing's age,—between Illuminism and Orthodoxy, Naturalism and Supernaturalism.* The one discredited reason: the other exalted it to supremacy. Both were right, and both wrong.

Rationalism was right in trusting reason; but it degraded reason by making it a mere organ of the finite, or by denying to it access to real supernatural being.

Hyper-orthodoxy was right in not trusting unaided reason; but it dishonored revelation, and, indeed, made revelation impossible, by not discerning the constitutional susceptibility of the soul to divine influence. So Naturalism and Supernaturalism each had a right and a wrong in the controversy, as conducted apart from that view of nature and man and religion which is implied in Immediateness.

Rightful in Naturalism is the claim that the principles and laws given in the first creation shall not be abrogated in the new creation,—that Christianity shall harmonize with Nature. But it is wrong when it demands that God's revelation of himself shall stop with the first creation; for every thing that we know of that prepares us to receive a higher; and that this should take the form of redemption is natural when once it is seen that man is great enough to sin.

Rightful also, in Supernaturalism, is the claim that man can recognize what is above Nature; that such a revelation is made to the human mind in Christ;

* Dr. Dorner, *Gesch. d. prot. Theol.*, S. 795, 800, gives a very beautiful exposition of Schleiermacher's teaching and influence in this particular.

that he is not a mere product of the race ; and that, without him, no human being can now attain the end for which he was created. But Supernaturalism is wrong when it is blind to the fact, that Christ, though not a growth of Nature, but Master and Lord of all its forces, comes, not to destroy, but to fulfil, and even in his person, and in his most spiritual offices, and in all his divine working, enters into humanity, and abides in it, in accordance with its own constitution and purpose, and so that its original idea may be fulfilled.

And so, in general, the difference between these two modes of viewing nature and man and God comes to nought if it be once seen that man was made for God, and can know God, and if we have at once a Christian idea of Nature, and such a knowledge of Christ as our nature is adapted to receive ; for the perfection of the redeemed man is the fulfilment of his creative idea. And though, without Christ, man is incomplete, and Christ is not a mere fruit of humanity, yet his advent was prepared for through all antecedent history ; and he is the natural, by being also the supernatural, Head of the race ; and he elevates and restores man to that communion with the divine reason, and participation in a divine good, which he was created to receive, but could not otherwise have attained.

And now permit me, in conclusion, to endeavor to mark the path from Rationalism to Faith which is opened by this doctrine of Immediateness.

We come first to historical Christianity. Dismissing special questions respecting particular books of the canon, and vexed questions of interpretation

which may now be set aside, it is not a difficult matter to ascertain, in a merely historical way, what Christianity is. The original documents to be studied are comparatively few. They are as well authenticated, to say the least, as any others by which we construct a history so remote. If all pressure were withdrawn from men's minds to accept them as vehicles of supernatural truth of permanent obligation; if the inquiry were simply and purely what was it believed by contemporaries of Jesus that he said and did, — there would be, on historical grounds, no difficulty in obtaining satisfactory information. The documents are at hand. Enough of them have stood the test of the severest criticism. They are genuine and authentic if any sources of history are so. Lessing conceded all this: the case is stronger now than in his day.

In consequence of Strauss's attack, the original documents have been subjected to a renewed examination unparalleled in minuteness and thoroughness of inspection. The effect has been, that the later infidelity, leaving the high *à-priori* ground taken by Strauss, has found itself compelled to deal with certain authentic and unimpeachable historical facts, which define what Christianity was as received by Christ's disciples, and as taught by Christ himself. We know what he said, what he claimed to be and to do, and what promises he held forth, as mere matter of history, beyond any reasonable question; and we must take history as we find it. Criticism, indeed, must have free play; it must not be fettered by foreign laws: yet it has its own canons. It is not an arbitrary thing; and we cannot play fast and loose

with its results, or treat it as a lawless method. It is a science with established laws. Historical criticism gives us, then, historical Christianity. As historical, it may be known. Whether we can accept it as divine, whether we can give it more than historical assent, whether it involves obligations and carries blessings reaching above and beyond the ordinary province of history, is not now in question. We come to it as to any historical religion, yet impelled by its claims and evidences, and our own needs, to examine it.

Its principle is Christ,—not the Church nor the canon, nor creeds and confessions, but Christ historically presented.

He claims to be able to reveal God to men, and to bring men to God. He claims to do this in a unique and unparalleled way,—in a way which exalts his person above all other historical persons, and his agency above all others. Historically, these peculiar claims are as well attested as any others. They are recorded in the earliest documents; they are an essential part of the history; they cannot be eliminated without total disintegration and destruction of the testimony, and upon principles which would make an end of all history. Among these claims are the following: Jesus is the Christ of God; he fulfils every Messianic office; he claims supernatural power; he speaks the words of God; he has power to forgive sin; he has a work to do which he finishes on the cross; he institutes a rite, which ever since has been observed by his followers, commemorative, by his command, of his death, and explanatory of it as accomplished for the remission of sins; he rises from the dead, and

associating his own name with that of the Father, from whom he comes to men, and the Spirit whom he sends, commands, as Lord and King, that all nations shall be disciplined and baptized, and taught to keep his commandments; he promises his perpetual presence; he announces also that he will be the Judge of the whole world at his second coming. Throughout his career, and in his teaching, the claims made for his person are altogether peculiar: nothing like it is true in respect to other founders of religions. He is himself the object of religious faith; he sends the Spirit of God, who testifies of him; he claims to sustain such a relation to the human soul, to be such a manifestation of the Divine, and to be so attested to the religious sense, that faith is obligatory, unbelief is sin. As he is the Object of religious faith, so is he the Subject of Christian doctrine. This, therefore, though progressive in form, in substance can never exceed the truth as it is in him. His religion is in its principle final, complete, supreme, and is founded that it may become universal, as it is to be eternal.

This is historical Christianity. The Church attests it; but, historically, it, and it alone, explains the existence of the Church. The Church could not have invented the faith; for, without the faith, there was and could have been no Church. Strauss's theory of a mythical origin of Christianity here goes to wreck; for the Church, as one has said, is necessary in his scheme to the myth: yet, without the myth, there could have been no Church.

Now, can we know this historical Christianity, in its essential characteristics, in its central Person and Principle, to be of God?

This knowledge is the subjective goal of all Christian evidences. This is the one vital question, every earnest man will feel, in the whole controversy. Questions of the Church, of the Canon,—of its extent and its inspiration,—are all secondary, however important. “Believe,” says Martin Luther, “so as to be able to say Yes if the whole world says No.” This is the faith a serious Rationalism craves; this is the faith every soul needs for repose; this is the faith Christ, as historically known, at once invites to and pledges. Can it be rationally gained and justified? Consider,—

1. Man is organized for divine knowledge. The human spirit is not an orphaned child of the Father of spirits; it is not, in its creative idea, an Isis sent out upon a weary pilgrimage to gather together the scattered members of a once living truth. The Faustian idea, that we can know nothing, it has well been said, is disloyalty to truth: it is the first article in a league and covenant with Mephistopheles.

2. But this original knowledge is dimmed. The religious history of mankind, which attests its reality, attests with equal decisiveness its need of renewal and purification. Man’s estrangement from God is even a more patent fact than his original sonship.

3. There is need of redemption: and the necessity of redemption makes revelation special and particular; for it must be historical and personal. We need a personal manifestation of God through a Redeemer.

4. Such a revelation meets us in Christ. It is for reason, though reason could not have originated it; it is in history, though history could not have produced it; it is, as we meet it, within this finite world which is ours: yet it appeals to and attests itself to

every longing, every susceptibility, every aspiration, of a soul made to commune with a higher world. Once truly seen, it moves the conscience; it quickens the religious sense; it attracts by a power which has proved itself the mightiest in human history. A few persons now are attempting to draw parallelisms between Christ and Socrates or other men of eminence. Such attempts were made in the third century, and utterly failed: they can succeed still less now. The character of Jesus, his spiritual power, distances all comparison. Meet him, then, on this broad highway of history. Of all historically certain things, he is the most so. He offers forgiveness of sin, spiritual cleansing, divine knowledge and help.

5. Can he give this SALVATION? Then is he known as divine. And there is but one ultimate test and proof of this, — but one corner-stone of inward assurance: it is the fact, the reality, of spiritual life.

Christ is first historically attested to us. He is so presented to common sense, to the historical sense, to the moral sense, to the natural religious sense, that there is the certainty of a duty, — the duty of seeking from him what he offers, of trusting him.

But the certainty of his redemptive power is only known, and can only be known, as he fulfils his own promise to those who believe him for his word and for his work's sake, and who do his will. In this experience, as his true Church in all generations testifies, he is immediately known as the Wisdom and the Power of God. And here Lessing's gulf closes; for the testimony of history becomes a fact of consciousness, and what is first accepted as a probability becomes a living certainty.

To this it may be objected, —

First, Your certainty is merely subjective. I deny this: it is an objective testimony, — the testimony of the Spirit of Christ. If it is maintained that this is impossible or incredible, then all religion is at an end. Every religion has an indispensable doctrine of immediateness. Deism admits contact with the divine at the moment of creation; historical religions, in the persons of their founders; Roman Catholicism, in the organism of the Church; Christians generally, in the inspiration of the Scriptures: Christ and his apostles recognize it also as the prerogative of all believers. If immediateness is in its nature merely subjective, then always, and at every point in human history, is it so: and then man's religious history becomes an inexplicable enigma; for it all along implies the existence of something, which, according to the objection, has no existence, yet without which it could not itself have been.

But it is objected again, Men may be deceived in this consciousness. So they may. Every thing genuine may be counterfeited. Yet it is not impossible to distinguish the false from the true. Every intuition of reason, every species of knowledge founded in immediate consciousness, every ultimate principle, is susceptible of verification. If genuine, it will stand all the tests of the understanding, of logic, of experience, of history, of life. The knowledge is not grounded in these tests. The certainty is immediately given. Yet the tests guard against mistake. Christianity attests itself divinely to the soul of the true believer. Its Founder said, "I receive not testimony from men." So the assurance of faith in

the humblest of his followers has its origin in God, and its ground in an immediate relation of that soul to God, and in a divine testimony. Here indeed, as everywhere else, man is exposed to error. And if any one, in fancied security, slights the divinely-instituted means of verification, he must pay the penalty of his stupidity or conceit. This certainty, therefore, without which no man can say of divine things, "I know they are real and true," must subject itself to all the appropriate tests of genuineness. Christianity is for the whole man, as it is for the whole race. It will approve itself to the logical understanding, and, above all, by its fruits. Yet the ultimate certainty is in its possession as a fact of life.

And let us not exclude the very possibility of revelation for the sake of guarding against the substitution of a false one for a true one. Let us not give up the very idea of certainty because certainty in a nature complex as our own may and must be tested.

The question is, ultimately, What is the basis of certainty respecting Christ's redemptive power? Unless such a basis be found, Rationalism is not wholly overcome. There are several alleged bases of belief.

Common sense is one. We have seen its triumph in Illuminism. It has its rights.

The Church is another. But how does the Church become infallible?

Inspiration is yet another. Inspiration of whom? How attested? By miracles? How are these attested as divine? We come at last to human testimony, given under such conditions that it is credible; at least, as Lessing would concede, incontrovertible. We

come especially to the testimony of Christ, so reported as to be historically certain, — a testimony to which Lessing failed to concede its rightful claims.

Yet, on this plane, we reach only historical faith, and, at most, that sort of certainty which is a high, or, as some claim, the highest, degree of probability.

There is a higher level ; there is a deeper ground. Christian Apologetics should not barter away its birth-right. The final, the assured certainty is founded in a fact of spiritual life. Here rest, eternally secure, the foundations of peace and hope, whatever currents and tides are flowing above and around.

But, finally, it may be said, You have founded the rational certainty of Christianity in Christianity itself. I admit the correctness of the statement, and claim it as an argument in my favor. Better had it been for the Christian cause had its advocates always really defended Christianity, and drawn their weapons from its divine armory. Where else, save in the religion itself, shall the conclusive evidence of its divineness be found ? Where but in its essential truths, its spiritual life, its central Person and Principle, attested still by a living and divine testimony, shall we expect to find the strong citadel and the invincible defence ?

The only sufficient apology for Christianity is Christianity itself.

Modern science goes back to its principles : Christian Apologetics must do the same. Modern Rationalism asks for present, self-attesting evidences, and will not hear of an incoming and outgoing of supernatural power eighteen centuries ago. The miracle, it thinks, is fading from view. The witnesses are dead.

But Christ is not dead, nor absent. Nor is he present merely by the records of his life and death, nor by words of inspiration alone ; though through him these are all secured, and in their divinest import. He still stands at the door of the human heart, and knocks for admission. He still enters its most secret chamber, and speaks his sovereign word of peace. And still the final and conclusive proof of the Christ of history is the Christ within us ; and still, as in the days of the apostle, the demonstration of Christianity is the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

IX.

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF BELIEF.

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THE characteristic trait of the nineteenth century, says a famous living critic, is its marked preference, in the domain of spiritual truth, for historic method. This preference is not the result of more active curiosity respecting historical details, but arises from the conviction that history, as a whole, furnishes the most adequate solution of those problems with which man, as a spiritual being, is perplexed. Language, philosophy, religion, afford like illustration of the application of this method. Although Max Müller claims that the study of language should be classed with physical inquiries, it would be easy to cull from his own pages ample proofs of the rich results which have flowed from the study of language in its historical relations. No man of our day has done so much to instil the fruitful lesson that language is itself the most venerable and authentic history, — a history running far beyond the birth of any literature. Subjected to his keen analysis, it seems no longer the mere medium for transmitting facts: it is itself more mysterious and instructive than any thing which it records. Accents

lighter than air have outlasted letters cut in rock ; and household words, — phrases first lisped, and in most familiar use, —

“ The simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try,” —

are memorials of a world that had passed away before the Pyramids were built. Such endearing terms as father, mother, brother, sister, daughter, suggest a circle of geographical and ethnical affinities unhinted in the earliest legend ; and the child learning to count upon his fingers points to a time, of which no tradition lingers, when the fair-haired, energetic Englishman, and the dreamy, dark-browed Hindoo, were speaking the same tongue, and dwelling together as brethren beneath the same tents. Thus lifting the veil that hides the beginnings of human history, language reveals its essential unity and its continuous development. The growth of speech is identified with a process of the reason ; the first creature who unconsciously conformed to its subtle laws standing as far above the brute as Sophocles or Shakspeare.

Nor in the study of thought, of which language is only the embodiment, has this tendency to make use of historic method been any less marked. From Descartes to Kant, the reigning systems of philosophy were psychological. The individual consciousness was the initial-point, — in effect emulating that Socratic self-interrogation, which, however superior to the physical speculations which it supplanted, at last only landed the wisest Greek in the dreary conclusion that he knew nothing. By this method, each mind was a measure of truth ; and every man solved

for himself the problems of existence. The soul was summoned as a single witness to testify respecting the mysteries of being. Hegel's familiar description of Jacobi, as a solitary thinker, in vain striving to guess a riddle hewn in an eternal rock, fitted many a fellow-pilgrim along that lonely road. The historic method in philosophy is precisely the reverse of this. Always contemplating man in his relation to the race, it interprets the individual by the universal consciousness. Assuming that whatever is subject to development and change must be studied, not in one stage of its growth simply, but in its continuous movement, it looks at truth, not only in its logical relations to a single system, but in its wide affinity with whatever the mind has, at any time, included within the circumference of its spiritual activity. Hence the history of philosophy is not the mere portal to philosophy; it is itself philosophy: all truth which the human mind may grasp being only relative, and the student accepting as his highest function the task of gathering up, and comparing with one another, these aspects of the Infinite and Absolute with which the soul has in successive ages been absorbed, but which, in the nature of the case, it can never fully fathom. The solution, though always advancing, is still never more than proximate. The history of philosophy is the history of efforts, not of ultimate results.

The boundary-line between religion and philosophy is far too shadowy to suffer any intellectual tendency to assert itself in one sphere without soon invading the other also. Religion, like philosophy, is subject in its actual manifestation to laws of de-

velopment and change. The comparative study of the successive phases of man's spiritual history; of the dimly-conceived or clearly-expressed beliefs that have lain at the roots of his supreme achievements; of the inner voices, which, rightly or wrongly, he has held to be divine; of the doubts with which he has wrestled, or the hopes which, in turn, have peopled his dreams with luminous visions of the open skies, — is now furnishing the highest application of historic method. By the side of the still youthful science of comparative philology, the science of comparative mythology is claiming recognition; and as we have learned that the dialects of remote barbarians illustrate laws involved in the polished languages of Greece and Rome, so we are bidden, in the spirit of a comprehensive religious hospitality, to count no form of faith common or unclean that has ever served as a bond of sympathy between the soul and its unseen Creator. Looked at in this light, all history is invested with sacredness. In man's changeful experience, we are saluted with signs of a divine presence; and the consciousness of the race becomes a progressive revelation of the Infinite Spirit.

The modern historic method, unlike that of which Bossuet may be taken as the most illustrious representative, does not aim to interpret the course of history by conceptions derived from revelation, but rigidly adheres to the rules of science. It therefore stands outside of revelation, subjecting sacred to the same criticism to which it subjects secular events. It judges Christianity as it judges all the great religions of the world. The truths are treated as facts of consciousness; and to these facts the same tests are every-

where applied. The questions, therefore, inevitably arise, In what way does this method stand related to the foundations of religious faith? How will its peculiar mode of apprehending truth ultimately modify those truths which form the basis of Christianity? Will the distinctive features of Christian doctrine be gradually obliterated, and the gospel sink to the level of natural religion? or will belief at last be rested on a deeper and broader basis? An intellectual revolution so complete must involve far-reaching consequences. In the theory of history which this characteristic tendency of our time embodies, there is involved a group of conceptions respecting human nature and human destiny, which overlaps, at many points, the province of dogmatic truth. This contact is too direct, and the problems which lie in either province are too nearly allied, to suffer any line to be drawn between the two.

The question here raised does not refer to the results of any of those subordinate critical investigations respecting special aspects of revealed truth, which, of late, have been so rife,—such as inquiries into the particular evidence of revelation, or the authenticity of distinct portions of the Divine Word,—but to the relation of the fundamental postulates on which historic method rests to the corresponding conceptions involved in Christianity. There are certain truths implied in the gospel as a complete system, the acceptance or rejection of which must be preliminary to the acceptance or rejection of any of its specific dogmas,—a general attitude of mind in approaching revelation as a whole, which, of necessity, determines the view taken of any of its parts.

The fact that some of the foremost promoters of historic method have proclaimed most loudly its essential antagonism to Christianity; and that the laws of historical development, assumed to have been demonstrated, have been alleged in proof of the proposition that the idea of a Supreme Being belongs to the uninstructed childhood of the race, and is destined to fade away before the purer blaze of the positive philosophy; and, on the other hand, the no less patent fact, that many devout believers in revelation look upon any application to history of scientific method as a virtual denial of Divine Providence,—render more imperative the duty of a dispassionate inquiry into the real bearing of this method upon the basis of belief. The method claims recognition as a legitimate outgrowth of modern thought. We cannot ignore it without ignoring the intellectual world in which we dwell. The question, what its ultimate results will be, is the most vital question now claiming the consideration of Christian scholars.

The two poles on which the world of modern thought is turning are the ideas of unity and progress. Unity underlies the statical, as progress underlies the dynamical, conditions of existence. Towards the recognition of these two principles, Science, in all her lines of inquiry, is ever moving. Each new discovery brings them into clearer view. What to ancient thinkers was a conception which all the phenomena of Nature and of history seemed to contradict, modern investigation has established as a strictly logical conclusion. The demonstration of the theory of gravitation, and the discovery in our own day (which can scarcely be reckoned as second to that) of the

correlation of the physical forces, point unmistakably in one direction. "There are not wanting reasons to expect," says the President of the Royal Astronomical Society, "that even the attraction of gravitation itself may be found to be a link in the same physical chain." The stately march of the constellations, and the fall of a sparrow to the ground, illustrate a single law; the burning gulfs which whirl and eddy around the earth's centre, and the mild splendor that illumines the northern sky, are manifestations of a common principle. Everywhere above us and around us are universal harmony and order. Nor, as we turn from unconscious matter to the more mysterious realm of mind, is this characteristic of creation any less apparent. In the subtle phenomena of organic growth; in the ceaseless evolutions which living structure everywhere presents, and through which it serenely moves from one degree of perfectness to another, ever clothing itself with new forms of beauty, and enriched with more manifold and wondrous adaptations to the system of which it is always an harmonious part; in the development of individual life through distinct and successive stages; and in the boldest hypothesis of science, the development of species, even, from an identical beginning, — we trace a continuous order. The reign of law is the last word of modern thought, — a reign alike all-pervading and absolute, whether in the realm of matter or of spirit. Nature and history equally confess it. Language, philosophy, religion, — all attest its sway.

If, perchance, we shrink from the application of this principle to those phenomena of human life which involve the conscious co-operation of the individual, —

an application which may seem to bind up the human will in the remorseless and inevitable flow of mere physical causation, — let us set clearly before us the sole alternative presented. If there is any such thing as progress in the successive phases of society; if there is any connection between one age and another; if any organic relation can be predicated of the present and the past, — postulates which, if not formally expressed, are virtually assumed, in the language which we habitually use, and which seems the expression of a mental habit which the mind spontaneously adopts, — we must regard all this as the result either of law or of chance. There is no logical middle ground on which we can halt between these opinions. We must regard all events as indeterminate, as discontinuous, as having no necessary relation, as wrenched from any connection with a series of antecedents, — a theory in which reason can never rest, and to which neither experience nor observation yields support, — or we must regard them as in some way linked to the regular operation of fixed laws. It is a most instructive fact, as illustrating this irresistible tendency of thought, that Lucretius, in that sombre masterpiece of Latin song, which to me seems more akin to our modern mind than any product of ancient literature, beginning with the theory that this universal frame was generated by the casual repercussions of primordial atoms, directly slides into the recognition of a principle precisely the reverse. The uniformity of law is no less his doctrine than that the origin of all things is chance; and, while the latter is set forth as a speculative theory, the former is enforced by an appeal to facts. Yet the theory of chance is no more the negation of Nature than of his-

tory. In either sphere, it is the negation of those primary conceptions on which Nature and history alike repose. The recognition of law is the condition of any rational investigation of either. When it is not seen, there is only chaos come again.

But admitting this fundamental postulate, on which any intelligent study of history must rest, the question next presents itself, In what sense shall law here be understood? Shall it be regarded as no more than an inference of the mind from the phenomena of life, and as the ultimate conception which the human mind can form? So says the positive philosophy. With such as adopt this system, law, as applied to history, is simply the logical conclusion derived from combining with the series of external phenomena the method of development supplied by an analysis of the individual mind. Vico was allured by the idea of law when he applied to history his now-forgotten theory of cycles; and Kant, years ago, expressed in sober language the hope, that, when the facts of history should be contemplated on a broad scale, they would display a regular course, and a continuous unfolding of one tendency. But the positive philosophy is peculiar in making this conclusion final; in denying to the intellect all capacity for recognizing any truth beyond. As the heavens, according to this system, declare no other glory than that of Hipparchus, of Kepler, and of Newton; so history involves no logical recognition of a spiritual order or of an overruling Providence. Those sentiments which are peculiar to humanity, and which would seem to constitute its supreme characteristic, are set aside as fictions of the imagination, from the

debasement of which the advance of science is a progressive emancipation. The course of human progress is analyzed into three successive stages, in turn marked by the predominance of theological, of metaphysical, and, finally, of positive conceptions. In this latter stage, the intellect, convinced of the impossibility of arriving at any transcendental truth, and abandoning inquiry into the causes of phenomena, confines itself to the only legitimate field of research, — the study of invariable relations. Those who would go beyond this limit are stigmatized by the founder of the positive philosophy as *demi-philosophes*.

It is true, that while Comte himself was betrayed at times into such arrogant assertion of the antagonism between his system and any revealed religion, as, in the opinion of one of his most intelligent critics, almost to array him with the advocates of chance, his more cautious English followers have, for the most part, contented themselves with saying that the positive philosophy simply leaves the great problems of life and destiny unsolved; any question as to the existence of a supernatural order remaining still an open one. So far, however, as the practical bearing of the theory is concerned, the result is just the same. The study of history, with those who accept this theory, has never advanced beyond the line which Comte so distinctly traced. It remains a study of relations, — a study addressed simply to the understanding. It contemplates social precisely as it contemplates physical phenomena, and recognizes in the mystery of human life no deeper problems than Nature herself everywhere presents. In the most elaborate treatment of this subject which recent

English literature presents, the laws of social are identified with the laws of organic evolution; and history is reduced to a department of biology. In this view, the social movement is simply a series of successive adaptations. From the established principle, that the scale is higher as the organism is more diverse, and more exactly adjusted to its conditions, the ultimate law of human development is determined to be progress from the simple to the complex. Thus, it is claimed, is furnished a key to the phenomena of history.

But what real satisfaction do conclusions such as this afford? The great problems of life — what are they, after all, but problems of duty and of destiny? How can we accept a method which interprets history while leaving these problems out of sight? How much are we helped in interpreting the mystic hieroglyphs of time by thus sinking thought and feeling and desire to the level of organic life? Why so laboriously unroll the records of the past if they convey no deeper lesson than the correspondence between man and the brute creation?

In contrast with this theory, which makes law the ultimate conception, historic method presents a second view, which regards all phenomena as the expressions of a Supreme Will. So far as relates to the universal sway of law, these two theories do not stand in the slightest opposition; for law, in the strict sense, is simply the antithesis of chance. Considered in its negative relation, it can be nothing more. The recognition of law does not, in the least degree, exclude the positive assumption, that something may lie behind it. Law is not any the less law because

it leads us to infer a lawgiver. We do not emasculate the thought by asking whether there may not be another and a higher. We neither imperil our conception of the fixed order of the universe, nor of the continuity of history, when we view law as the expression of a Supreme Intelligence, executing in its course the behests of a Supreme Will. Not only does the idea of law stand in no necessary conflict with that of will, but one is, in fact, the essential condition of the other; for the fixed and uniform operation of natural laws alone renders them the instruments of a Supreme Intelligence. The ever-varying combinations, under the direction of a Supreme Intelligence, of uniform single forces, are the source of all phenomena. There can be no cruder and more inaccurate conception than that which regards law as an adamant chain of causes and effects. All the progress, therefore, of modern science in the direction of unity and order, is but the portal of a more august conception. The changeless speech that day utters to day tells of a Being "in whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning;" while, on the other hand, the recognition of a Supreme Will lends new majesty to that universal law, whose "seat is the bosom of God."

But this is not all. The very method by which the positive philosophy determines the laws of human progress, when fairly applied to all the phenomena of life, renders it impossible to rest in the idea of law as ultimate. The forces of history are dynamical as well as statical: we deal not simply with a fixed order, but with a continuous movement; we seek to include within the sweep of our premise and conclusion, not

only that which is, but that which has been, and that which is to be. Hence we are forced to use in our investigations a compound method, following the hint furnished in the higher physics. The science of history thus becomes, to quote one of its most eminent expounders, a combination of inductive with deductive reasoning, resting on an assured basis only so far as it connects with generalizations from experience the established laws of human nature. The student of history does not deal alone with external facts and with tables of statistics; he starts with data furnished by his own consciousness; and, without the light that he thus carries in his forehead, he would mine his way in impenetrable darkness. But, so soon as he studies his own consciousness, he is confronted with phenomena wholly unlike those which the external world presents. These phenomena are as real as the phenomena of physics. He cannot doubt them nor deny them without doubting or denying his own existence. They constitute that most mysterious of all facts, — his own conscious personality. He cannot dismiss them as unreal without questioning the reality of his consciousness; and to do this is to doubt the reality even of his doubts. If he know any thing, he knows himself, not only as subject to the laws of physical causation, but as a thinking, willing creature, a rational and voluntary agent, — akin, indeed, to unconscious matter on one side of his fearfully and wonderfully fashioned structure, but, on the other, touching with more vital contact the transcendent realm of mind, living and acting in a sphere above the level of blind natural force, endowed with conscience, looking before and after. Surveying from this centre

of his intellectual and moral consciousness the course of history, he is forced, on grounds which the positive philosophy accepts, to recognize the presence of something higher than blind, unconscious law.

Should it be objected, that, in making such a leap, the mind transgresses the rules of strict scientific method, and deserts the domain of reason for that of the imagination, it will be sufficient, in reply, to quote the striking words of one of the most emphatic asserters of scientific method in its application to the phenomena of history. "There is in poetry," says Mr. Buckle, in a later passage of his work, in which the insufficiency of his own theory seems almost to dawn upon him, "a divine and prophetic power, and an insight into the turn and aspect of things, which, if properly used, would make it the ally of science instead of the enemy. By the poet, Nature is contemplated on the side of the emotions; by the man of science, on the side of the understanding. But the emotions are as much a part of us as the understanding; they are as truthful; they are as likely to be right. Though their view is different, it is not capricious. They obey fixed laws; they follow an orderly and uniform course; they run in sequences; they have their logic and method of inference. Poetry, therefore, is a part of philosophy, simply because the emotions are a part of the mind. If the man of science despises their teaching, so much the worse for him." "Surely," he adds, "all our faculties are needed in the pursuit of truth."

Let not the claim, then, of being scientific, be longer usurped by such as hold that the generalizations of the understanding are the only solid results of thought;

nor such as scorn the mysteries of the spiritual world as outside the field of legitimate research be deemed alone worthy to wear the mantle of philosophy; nor those, who, in obedience to their moral intuitions, recognize a Supreme Will and a moral order of the world, be thought hopelessly adrift on a sea of wild vagaries. On the contrary, that view of history which soars above impersonal law is the only sufficient application of historic method; for it is the only theory that includes both the moral and the physical phenomena, — the only theory that satisfies the inquiring spirit.

In the idea of a Supreme Will, to which we have been thus logically led, is involved, however, a further series of conceptions. Not only does the mind demand an intelligent Ground of the beginning of phenomena; it is just as much constrained, by a necessity of its natural constitution, to recognize a Presence beneath the successive changes of existence, controlling its relations and conditions: and, as these successive changes cannot be conceived of apart from a design, it is led, finally, to the apprehension of an end towards which all things are directed. The conception of a Supreme Will, therefore, presents itself in the threefold aspect of a First Cause, a Directing Providence, and a Final Purpose. Not only are these three conclusions logically evolved from the admission of a Supreme Will: without them, the acknowledgment of will is hardly an advance on the theory of law. Unless the conception of a Supreme Will be thus expanded, it remains but another name for fate.

A Supreme Will, always acting through the instrumentality of invariable law, has been deemed by

some inconsistent with the doctrine of a Divine Providence ; but such a presumption could arise only in a mind that conceived of Providence as something in its nature irrational and arbitrary. A zeal for asserting the Divine Sovereignty has betrayed men, at times, into the incautious statement, that the Divine Will may be divorced from law and its supreme acts, be irrespective of any invariable principles. If, however, we eliminate from the doctrine of Providence the element of law, we sap the foundation on which the possibility of Providence reposes. The whole direction of events by a Supreme Intelligence presumes the presence everywhere of law ; and even in the most signal and exceptional displays of supernatural power, in those miraculous attestations to which revelation makes appeal, we cannot believe that law is violated. "The will revealed to us in religion," says that most sober and judicious writer, the Duke of Argyle, "is not, any more than the will revealed to us in Nature, a capricious will."

We reach, then, the conclusion, that the historic method, instead of leading, as has been both claimed and feared, to a cheerless atheism, when followed out in fair accordance with its own principles, involves the recognition of the great truths on which religion rests. Dismissing as absurd the suggestion that order originally sprang from chance, and rejecting, as not less at war with man's intuitive convictions, the theory that the Infinite and finite are mutually exclusive, and that between the Creator and the creature a great gulf is fixed, sound historic method, adoring the presence of a Supreme Thought and Purpose in the phenomena of time, and demanding a real ground as the

condition of their continuous development, accepts for its lofty mission the task of tracing in history the evolutions of this Supreme Intelligence, and thus, by interpreting collective in the light of individual consciousness, of working out the universal laws of reason and of conscience. Philosophy, in combination with history, is alone competent to this great task. Only so far as they are brought into reciprocal relation can the moral order of the world be comprehended. In this sense, philosophy and history are one.

The inquiry thus proposed touches the holiest verities of life. The end in view is, not the extension of the frontiers of speculation, but the cure of spiritual ills. Man sees himself a being of intelligence and conscience. The laws of either sphere claim entire obedience. He cannot deny what one affirms as true; he cannot disobey what the other reveals as right; nor will he believe that between them any contradiction can exist. The symmetry of his whole spiritual growth springs from this faith,—that the laws of the moral and the laws of the intellectual world are not in conflict. Rejecting the pernicious lie, that science and religion exist apart in two separate and antagonistic realms, he accepts as the highest aim of study the task of healing the unhappy breach between them. In this task, history yields him the most efficient help.

Thus apprehended in the light of a moral order, history throbs through all its length and breadth with a sympathetic life. Its superficial changes derive their meaning from the endless action and re-action of organic spiritual laws. Hence follows, as a necessary inference, the essential unity of the human race.

This essential unity supplies the basis of a collective spiritual consciousness. The teachings of this universal consciousness, as they relate to the great problems of human destiny, are the supreme lessons history has to teach. Beside them, the conquests of empires, the discoveries of new worlds even, are of small account. And the most instructive lesson that history thus teaches is, that these highest applications of philosophy only lead us, at last, to a result in which religion has all along confided; the modern historic method merely making plain to reason what all prophets and seers have seen in vision. In establishing, on scientific grounds, the great truth of a moral, as the counterpart and efflorescence of a natural order, we drink of that spiritual Rock whose shadow all generations have sought.

It is the distinctive merit of the great German thinkers, that they have been foremost to affirm this spiritual theory of history. Whatever their shortcomings, however hasty their generalizations, however, at times, their eyes have been blinded to the crowning fact which life presents, — the enigma of a conscious will, neither absorbed nor annihilated by the universal order, — they have, on the other hand, primarily regarded man as a spiritual being, as essentially related to a super-sensuous world, and as allied by the laws of his spiritual nature with a Supreme Intelligence. German thought has emphasized the ideal aspect of life and history. It has rendered religion an incalculable service in the unrelenting warfare it has waged with the mechanical philosophy that divorced God and Nature, and saw in human society only an aggregate of conscious atoms. We owe to Germany that

healthy Realism, which, affirming the divine immanence in creation, traces all true historic progress to the evolution of a divine thought.

And, as I write these lines, the final volume, fresh from the press, of Bunsen's "God in History," calls vividly to mind the latest of that illustrious series, of which Leibnitz was the first,—one who not only exhibits in a striking manner those characteristics of the German thought to which reference has just been made, but whose personal character not less illustrates the conservative influence of historical study upon religious speculation. Resembling Leibnitz not a little in the extent and variety of his attainments, and in his wholly exceptional position as a man of letters; like Leibnitz, a born mediator in the long strife of faith and reason,—Bunsen zealously charged himself with the solution of the problem that Leibnitz first proposed,—of establishing, by the two paths of speculation and research, the presence of a divine order in the seeming conflict of the ages. This luminous thought runs through all his writings. Whether seeking to disentangle the confusion of Egyptian dynasties, or interpreting the rapt utterances of David and Isaiah, or developing from newly-discovered writings of Hippolytus the creed of the Apostolic Church, he had this purpose always in his mind. To Bunsen, all history was instinct with a divine presence; faith in the possibility of demonstrating a speculative basis for the soul's intuitive perceptions, the inspiring motive of his profoundest study. "The readers for whom we write," says he, "are those to whom the truth of history is a sacred thing; the history of God's divine dealings with mankind, the

most sacred of all things; and an acquaintance with these, the most important of all objects for their souls' peace."

In his rapid and brilliant survey of the successive stages of human consciousness which betoken this progressive incorporation of the Divine Spirit, Bunsen shows all the striking excellences, and all the striking defects, of German thought; but, to my mind, the most marked thing, after all, about him, was the manner in which his daring speculation was tempered by his historic spirit. Quickened with all the living motions of the present, he was yet, in the words with which one of our own poets has pictured himself,

"The born disciple of an elder time."

Hence it was, that religion, with Bunsen, was no mere metaphysical abstraction, — food only for fruitless disputation: it was a divine reality; a significant fact, underlying all other facts; an objective presence, to whose sway his soul willingly surrendered. Gazing in vision at the skies, his faith pillowed itself upon solid rock. Hailing the Church of the Future, he was knit by all the cords of his being to the Church of the Past. He loved with passionate fondness its old familiar hymns, its solemn forms of prayer. As his friend Nitzsch described him, "He was a thorough liturgical Christian." Seldom has one been so inadequately presented in his books. In his familiar correspondence, the fuller man appears. Yet only those who have met him in the unstudied intercourse of private life; who have watched him, when, with face beaming almost as an angel's, he discoursed of the

high mysteries of the spiritual world, — can realize how full he was of faith and of the Holy Ghost.

While, therefore, the historic method has been wrested by some to the denial of religious truth, in the hands of its greatest masters it is the ally, not the foe, of faith. Insisting on the présence everywhere of invariable law, it not only does not lose sight of personality, but presents as one of its highest results the inspiring truth, that man's personal realization of his relation to a Living Person is the efficient cause of his individual and social progress. The line of his march is radiant with this conviction. It is not a mere generalization of the intellect, but a living, progressive force, — an actual indwelling in human lives of divine illuminations. The direct application of all this to Christianity cannot be mistaken. There is an analogy that should never be lost out of sight between natural and revealed religion ; and all that we have traced of the divine working in the ordinary constitution of society trains us better to understand the laws of the spiritual kingdom. There is one Lord over all. While no science of history could ever supplant revelation, and no investigation of its laws could ever disclose those truths which the gospel brings to light, it cannot be doubted that the modern method of contemplating the phenomena of history creates a powerful predisposition to accept some of the most distinctive truths of Christianity. The precise form of our belief is, in all cases, the result of established mental habits. Whether we look at history or at Nature, we always look through a colored glass ; and I claim that this tendency to recognize in history an organic unity and a continuous life bears directly

upon a fundamental doctrine of the gospel, for a reaffirmation of which the deepest religious thought of our day is yearning.

Christianity, taken as a whole, may be justly termed the most historical of all religions, — not in the sense simply that it rests on the best authenticated basis of historic fact, but for the profounder reason, that only in its continuous and vital connection with history can it be completely manifested. In its true aspect, it is not a fact, but a power, — not one event, but an increasing purpose that runs through the ages. This purpose is fulfilled, not in effecting individual redemption, but in building up a spiritual kingdom. The gospel swells with this imperial theme. Its closing chapters hail as the final consummation the heavenly Jerusalem, with its streets of gold, its gates of pearl, its walls of jasper and sapphire. While the incarnation must remain the central truth of Christianity, the eternal fount whence all the streams of living water flow, yet the full purpose for which the Word was made flesh cannot be understood except in connection with that of which it is represented as the essential ground, — the gift of the Holy Ghost. The continued indwelling of the Divine Spirit in regenerate humanity is the living fact on which the Church is built. As a consequence of this indwelling, the children of the true Israel are not simply converted individuals: they are members of one Body, branches of one Vine. It is their ineffable calling to be built up a spiritual temple, all the parts of which, fashioned by Wisdom herself, shall be fitly framed together. This organic oneness of spiritual life, this corporate identity of the new creation, is implied in all apostolic

teaching. It is the inexorable condition of sound spiritual growth. The last prayer of our Lord for his disciples — foreboding, from the darkness of his most bitter anguish, the dark future of the Church which he purchased with his own blood — was, that they might be one in that transcendent sense in which he was one with the Father. The emphasis with which these words were charged makes it impossible for language to overstate the organic nature of spiritual life; for what more substantial unity can be conceived than that of the Father and the Son?

It is then, I need hardly say, in re-enforcing our conception of the Church, that the influence of historic method will be most directly felt. To one who denies the postulates on which this method rests, the Universal Church can have no existence save as a dead abstraction. Like Laodamia, he may dream of clasping a body;

“But unsubstantial Form eludes his grasp.”

On the other hand, the habit of looking at history as an organic whole, of recognizing the continuity of its development, and of tracing beneath its angry and tumultuous waves the serene under-current of a divine purpose, opens the mind to entertain the grand apostolic outline of Christ's spiritual kingdom. In that higher realm, such a mind will instinctively anticipate unity and law. In the varied phenomena of individual experience, it will be prone to detect a pervading principle. It will refuse to dissipate the Church into an “airy nothing,” a figment of devout imagination; and will read in the great promise of

the continued indwelling of the Holy Ghost the assurance of a real tie between the body and the head. That Divine Presence which the sacraments are meant to witness will not only be felt as real, but as the innermost of all realities. The unity of the Church will be recognized as intrinsic and essential, — as the expression of the unity of the informing Spirit, by which the growth of the mystical body is shaped. The mission and office of the Holy Ghost contemplate nothing short of this. We lose out of Christianity its grandest aspect if we shut our eyes to this result. Am I wrong in the belief that the yearning for a fuller apprehension of this feature of our common faith is at this moment the deepest impulse that stirs the heart of Christendom? Do I fail to read the signs of the times aright, when I affirm that a craving to escape from partial, superficial views to the grand catholic foundations, to forsake broken cisterns for the river of God that is full of water, is the secret of the unrest that seems now characteristic of all the great families of faith? and shall I err in hailing these intellectual tendencies, which form so marked a feature of our time, as opening the way for a more adequate realization of Christ's kingdom?

Such catholic unity can never result from mere agreement in practical aims: it must rest on the hearty recognition of one truth. That there exists such objective truth, independent of every man's opinions, must be granted by all who would not reduce religion down to simple individual consciousness. Unless we accept, without limitation, the doctrine of the inner light, and view each soul as an immediate gush from the eternal Fount, its crystal tide unstained by any

admixture of earthly elements, a supreme and sufficing revelation of the Infinite, we are forced to acknowledge some external rule of faith.

The current Protestant opinion finds this external rule in Scripture. It reverently regards the written Word as the sole historical authority. Chillingworth's familiar maxim is well-nigh universally received. But a moment's reflection shows that the Scriptures were not the source, but the product, of belief. They are the authentic and perfect utterances of an already existing faith; the spontaneous outgush of that more abundant Life, whose presence had been attested by marvellous signs before a line of the New Testament was written. While we cannot exaggerate the authority of Scripture as a storehouse of divine truth, as a record illuminated on every page and in every verse by the Holy Spirit, we yet go very wide of its real meaning when we make it the sole or ultimate foundation. The Word, which was in the beginning with the Father, and which, in the fulness of time, was incarnate in a person, was not a written, but a living Word. This living, ever-proceeding Word is the foundation; and other foundation than this can no man lay.

Has not experience furnished painful proof that the resting of Christianity on the ordinary basis of historical facts must be a failure? I would not seem to depreciate those learned critical investigations into the genuineness and credibility of the four Gospels, of which recent Christian scholarship has been so productive; but, even were it granted that these investigations have demonstrated that no recorded facts are so well attested as those which the evangelists report,

I am still unshaken in the conviction, that when these narratives are dissociated from that Christian consciousness of which they were the earliest fruit, and in which they must ever find their surest witness, they are stripped of their distinctive value. In other words, Scripture derives its whole authority from its vital connection with the Church. The two stand or fall together. The written Word finds its firmest support and only sure interpretation in the living Word, whose perpetual office it is to guide and illumine the household of faith. The source of all conviction of divine things is that Eternal Spirit, which, in its substantial union with the human soul, is now, and ever has been, the Light that lighteth every man. The operation of this Spirit in the organic consciousness of Christendom, and its logical development from age to age, is the historical basis of belief,—historical in the sense that it is the inner, productive principle of all true historical progress, and that in harmonious historical expansion, clothing with new forms a truth the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, it finds its most convincing argument.

For while the Divine Spirit works directly upon every soul, he yet always works in accordance with fixed and universal laws; and the utterance of the individual consciousness, when the genuine utterance of the Spirit, will ever be in agreement with the truth spoken in the beginning. The Spirit is not commissioned to reveal new truths, but to reveal the old in new aspects and relations. He takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. His highest function is in revealing to the soul Him who thus was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express

image of his person. This illuminating grace is, therefore, a principle of perfect unity. Its invariable test is the confession of one Lord, one faith, one baptism. The consenting voice of this universal consciousness, publishing from age to age a compact body of Christian dogma, in which the original teaching of Scripture is more precisely re-affirmed, — Scripture and dogma being simply the embodiment of the same eternal reason, — one living word pervading both, — becomes a rule of faith which it is the highest exercise of reason to interpret, but which reason can never, without contradicting its own supreme processes, deny.

In such recognition of the ever-proceeding, ever-present Word as the historical basis of belief, lies the only conciliation of the antagonism of faith and reason. The adventurous and confident intelligence of modern times scorns the notion of any rule imposed on the soul by an authority outside itself. It quotes with eager approbation the lines of our foremost living bard, —

“ Our little systems have their day;
They have their day, and cease to be.”

And, if the dogmatic faith of the Church be no more than a system laboriously framed by human wisdom, man is right in refusing to bend his reason to it; but, if we recognize the normal development of Christian doctrine as a result of the direct operation of the Divine Reason, we renounce no legitimate spiritual rights in submitting to its authority. In contact with these teachings of the universal reason, the most eminent acts of the individual reason will be elicited.

The same voice speaks within us and without us : its teachings are identical, whether uttered by the Church, or written on the tablets of the heart. Faith, then, instead of being the denial, is the supreme exercise, of reason. The crude and formal ways in which the infallibility of the Church has been asserted should not blind our eyes to the vital truth which this theory expresses. In reverently acknowledging this truth, we are no more slaves of superstition than the rapt astronomer, who cried, as he caught the music of the spheres, "I read thy thoughts after thee, O God !"

Thus regarding faith as the result of the constant operation in human life of the Divine Spirit, we contemplate the future without fear. Though foes are without, and fears within, the walls of the living temple are always rising. That steady, resistless march of creative power, which the material universe everywhere exhibits, is the promise of what is taking place in the new creation. The material is, indeed, but a fleeting emblem of the spiritual ; for the heavens shall wax old, and as a vesture shall they be folded up : but unto the Son he saith, "Thy throne, O God ! is for ever and ever."

X.

THE ARGUMENT FOR CHRISTIANITY, COMPLEX
AND CUMULATIVE.

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CHRISTIANITY, as we find it in the New Testament, claims to be superhuman and supernatural. The argument which we submit in support of this claim is founded on three prominent features; viz., Christianity as a history, Christianity as truth, and Christianity as a life. In presenting this argument, we propose, in the first place, to describe each of these features of Christianity as it is presented to us in the New Testament. Secondly, we shall ask how far these features prove Christianity to be supernatural when considered apart, and when considered jointly in their mutual dependence and cumulative strength. Thirdly, we shall inquire how far this evidence has been weakened or set aside by the assailants of Christianity. Each of the three divisions of our argument will be divided into three subordinate heads.

I. We inquire what Christianity is in the three features named, as history, as truth, and as life. And,—

1. What is Christianity as history?

Christianity begins as a history, — the history of the

most extraordinary man, by common consent, in character, career, and influence, who ever lived upon the earth, or influenced the course of human affairs. He appears at first as a teacher and reformer. He gathers disciples, impressing himself by some uncommon fascination, wherever he goes, upon one and another whom he attaches to his person and his cause, in spite of the severity of the service and the frankness with which he explains it. He speaks, to the public, doctrines that are strange for their searching character, and almost revolutionary for their boldness, but always with the air of authority,—as one divinely commissioned to proclaim the truth, and exact obedience. His deeds attract attention and enforce awe at the mysterious power which lay in his hand and his voice. At his touch, the springs of life were renewed; at his voice, the maiden awaked from a sleep which was death; the young man was given to his mother when borne upon his bier to the tomb; and Lazarus broke forth from the tomb itself. He uttered mysterious words respecting his person, his origin, his future destiny, and the triumph of his kingdom,—words which, as they grew more explicit, were more and more perplexing for their marvellous import and their astounding audacity,—words at which his most confiding followers were more and more amazed, though they believed he could not deceive them; while his bitterest enemies were more exasperated, though they could not satisfy even themselves that “he had a devil, or was mad.” Once or twice, extraordinary manifestations were made to a select number of his most trusted friends of something as yet unexplained in his person, which over-

whelmed them with amazement, and exalted them with reverent delight.

As we follow this new historic force to the death of its Author, it is all gathered within the person and the life of this one Being; all its energy, and capacity to endure, are in him; all its power to gain or hold the convictions or the confidence of others is his personal force. He dies in shame and agony: he is buried; and in his tomb are buried with him the hopes of those who had looked for his coming and kingdom. It is their bruised and bleeding love, it is their weeping fidelity alone, that causes them to linger around the grave in which their loving Friend and Teacher now lies, and with whom the cause seems buried, — the lost cause, to which he sacrificed his life. Their hearts composed his epitaph: "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel."

But he lives again: he remains alive some forty days, and is then removed forever from the earth. But first he bequeaths to his followers the simple duty of proclaiming the history of his life: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." At the first recorded assembly of those who received this trust, they show that they are mindful of it by taking measures to give it effect: "Wherefore, of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."

Christianity thenceforward was propagated as history. At the bold proclamation of this completed

life, the cause, that was apparently lost, gains as it never had gained before. In the story of the dead Christ who had risen, there was power to shake the nations. When its adherents were commanded, on peril of their lives, not to teach in the name of Jesus, they made the simple reply, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." A new adherent also appears among the boldest advocates of the cause which he had persecuted, — not convinced, indeed, by the testimony of the other witnesses, but by the direct manifestation of the Master himself, from whom he received, not only his commission to teach, but the matter of the gospel which he was to proclaim. But Paul, like the rest, propagated Christianity as a history, telling the one story of the facts of Christ's life, superadding and emphasizing Christ's appearance and communications to himself. In his writings, largely doctrinal as they are, the well-known history is repeatedly assumed and affirmed to be true. The gospel of God, to which he is set apart as an apostle, is the history "concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead." Towards the end of his life, he enjoins upon Timothy to remember, as if this was all he needed to recollect, "that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my gospel." Some years later, another advocate of the cause speaks to certain disciples "of the things which are reported to you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven;" asserting, "We have not followed cunningly-devised fables

when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty ; for he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with him in the holy mount."

Christianity was accepted and believed as a true history. One of the most conspicuous instances, as well as the most detailed, of the acceptance of this history, is that of Paul, whose own account of the way, and the reasons why, he was led to believe it, is recorded in his letters, — a collection of writings which is as well attested and as undisputed as are the letters of Cicero. No critic doubts that they were written by him, and within some thirty years of the death of Christ. In some three or four years after this event, Paul himself, as we learn from his own statement, received this history as true, and superadded to it a history of what had befallen himself ; and forthwith he began to give his personal testimony to what he had known, and to what he believed, concerning it. Whether or not we receive Luke's history in the Acts of the Apostles as written in the first century, or not, no one ventures to deny, that, all through the last two-thirds of it, the history which Paul believed and proclaimed was received by multitudes of men. In some forty or fifty years after the death of Christ, the fact is noticed and recorded by secular historians (as Tacitus and Pliny), that a great body of believers in the story had spread themselves through the Roman Empire. All

the means of information which we possess warrant the conclusion, that Christianity was received by every one of these persons as a true history; and that every man who accepted baptism, gave his testimony, by this act, that he believed the story to be true.

The history proclaimed and accepted was, very largely, *a history of supernatural events*. We need not at present scrutinize the terms “supernatural” and “miraculous.” All that we affirm is, that the very kernel and interest of this history, as well as its attractiveness and force, lay in what was believed to have been wrought by divine power, and to have been incapable of being effected by any inferior agent or agency, whether of knowledge or skill. This was what Paul believed; this was what Paul’s disciples were taught in Thessalonica and Corinth, in the provinces of Galatia, and in Rome,—all within some sixteen or twenty years after the Christian story was complete. That all this was believed is what Pliny and Tacitus confirm. This is what no man doubts was universally taught and accepted wherever undisputed Christian and profane documents record the universal sentiment of the growing Church. None but the most superficial and conceited would deny that this was believed from the moment when Christianity began to move after the death of its Leader. The ablest and sturdiest of modern opponents of supernatural Christianity, F. C. Baur, says most explicitly,* “While the historical criticism has nothing to do with the inquiry what the resurrection was in fact, it must hold fast to the assertion, that, in the

* Geschichte d. christl. Kir. I. Abschn. p. 42.

belief of the first disciples, it had become an established and incontrovertible certainty. In this belief, Christianity had gained a firm ground for its historic development. What must be presupposed as the essential foundation of this history is not the fact that Jesus rose from the dead, but the fact that it was believed that he had risen. However we may seek to explain this faith, the resurrection of Jesus had become to the first Christians a fact of conviction, and had for them all the reality of an historical fact."

We have considered Christianity thus far as a spoken or traditional history, — as a story passed from mouth to mouth, and repeated from city to city, gaining credence, till not only Jerusalem, but many cities of the empire, were filled with the report. Taking a step forward, we speak of it as written, and observe, —

The Christian history recorded in the New Testament is a *well-attested and accredited history*. We do not assert, at present, that it is a true history: we hope to prove that it is true. All that we now claim is, that it is as well attested as most histories, and far better than very many, by all the ordinary criteria by which such histories are tried and judged. We do not say that its events are not violently improbable when looked at as simply historical, and do not require a very extraordinary amount of evidence to counterbalance and overcome this improbability. But this additional evidence required is not simply historical. Of historical evidence, we have all in quantity and in quality which could be expected. We claim for the writers only the competence and honesty of ordinary narrators, and for their recorded history only the exactness and consistency of a faith-

ful narrative. We dismiss all questions of inspiration as premature and impertinent. Of the recorded story, we assert that it is historically well attested; that its geography is accurate; its chronology is satisfactory; its descriptions of the state of society at that particular juncture of Jewish affairs—as we know it from other sources—are exceedingly truthful and graphic. Its singular record of a prophecy of Christ concerning the fate of Jerusalem fixes that discourse, whatever its import may be, as having been delivered before the event itself. The four writers agree with one another as well as, and even better than, we ought to expect. From their several narratives, we can compile as good a continuous and chronological story as we can of any other life told by as many biographers. Paul's own history, as said to have been recorded by Luke, is wonderfully attested by the personal letters which contain so much of his biography. In short, from every source of evidence that is brought within our reach, we gain all the confirming attestations which any reasonable person would ask for. Some of these sources are wanting, we know. No observers of these events, who were not believers in the claims of Christ, have recorded their version of this history, unless we except Josephus; no dwellers or procurators in the provinces reported their version, and their theory of Paul's assertions and career; no keeper of the archives at Rome, no commission of the college of augurs, or any other literary or scientific association at the capital, has given any reports which were sent up to Tiberius by Pilate, or the action of the imperial government upon the same. All such accessories are wanting, we

know. We concede that the Christian story is recorded only by Christian historians, — those who believed in its truth, and gave their explanation of its events. We are sorry that we have not the witnesses on the other side, that we might confront them with ours, and cross-examine them. But, though they are not present, we can account for their absence from the court of history. The affairs of the Jews were always ignored at the imperial city. The people were regarded by its philosophers and historians as the devotees of a baneful superstition, and as the natural enemies of human kind. Jesus, in their view, was but one more of the ever pestilent and seditious rabbis; and Christianity was one additional Jewish sect. Moreover, the story of Abraham and Moses and Joshua, the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* of this people, had, for hundreds of years, solicited the attention of Greek and Roman critics; but they had not condescended to honor it with a critical even though contemptuous judgment. Why should they send a commissioner or critic extraordinary to Syria to report on the new movement of Christ? The lyrics and prophecies of David and Isaiah had been within the reach of Greek and Roman scholars for centuries, but were practically unknown to them: why should they feel an interest in the reported discourses of Jesus and Paul?

The non-believing Jews themselves, had they left many histories of those times, would have made little or no mention of the Christian sect. Those who regarded the claims of Jesus with honest contempt would not condescend to notice the appearance of so vile a fanaticism; those who viewed them with confessed and ill-disguised apprehension would designedly

leave them unnoticed in formal history. Only one such history was written, — that by Josephus, — and this is not a history of Jewish sects or of unadjusted Messianic claims, but a laudatory argument on the past greatness of the Jewish nation, skilfully addressed to the ignorant prejudices of the Roman people. There was no place in it for any but the most casual notice of Jesus, and no call for any at all.

But, though the field for attestation is narrowed to Christian witnesses and writers, it is broader than is usually acknowledged, from the great variety of points within this field upon which a comparison can be instituted. The minuteness of statement, the artlessness of the record, and the very great number of confirming circumstances from the condition of the country and the times, are, in some sort, a compensation for the deficiency of attesting and accrediting witnesses outside the Christian society. As we shall see by and by, it befitted the genius and attitude of the truth which the history enforces that it should begin in obscurity, without the notice or support of many critics or spectators.

The Christian history, as it was natural and almost necessary that it should be, was very *early exaggerated, caricatured, and corrupted* by a great variety of weak imitations, extravagant legends, incongruous additions, and designed mutilations. The Christian history was enacted and reported at a fermenting period of the world's progress. Credulous superstition, bigoted intolerance, Oriental extravagance, and pretentious Gnosticism, were all active forces. The orthodox Jew, the ritualistic Pharisee, the cultured, or, as he would now be called, the scientific Sadducee,

and the ascetic Essene, formed as many separate schools of thought and feeling. The Platonic Alexandrianism had endeavored to reconcile and combine Plato with Moses and the prophets. The æsthetic culture of Athens and Ephesus, and the luxurious elegance of Corinth, each had its fixed types of taste and fashion. The practical, world-subduing, and world-organizing Roman, with his coarse tastes and cruel passions, presented another strong type of character. Into this seething mass of opinions, traditions, philosophies, and passions, the Christian history was thrown as a powerful and controlling force.

We do not speak of its influence on the many whom it repelled and offended: we are concerned only with its effects upon many, who, in some sort, either accepted it as true, or sought to use its name and authority as sanctions to their ill-digested philosophies or their newly-contrived theories of religion. Others, whose religion was more fervent than their morality was careful, did not scruple to invent or to dream out apocryphical gospels, to indite weak epistles, and prefix to them venerable and honored names. Others, in simple dogmatic impudence, headed so-called Christian sects, and led off parties in which every form of partisan violence and denunciation was employed. The teachings of the Old Testament, and the as yet unwritten traditions of the original witnesses, of the life of Christ, were at first mutilated, misreported, and misapplied; and the writings of the last were treated with similar unfairness. The writings of Paul, of Peter, and of Luke, give abundant indications that all these movements had fairly begun in their times. That they should not only have begun,

but have been developed in forms that were both extravagant and offensive, is no more than was natural, if we consider the times and the men with which Christianity had first to do. On the supposition that the Christian history was true, it is not strange that it gathered about itself, and in a certain sense attached to itself, a burden of heterogeneous elements which it only partially purified, and subdued to its control. It is not strange that there was much in this fermenting mass that was subdued to the purity of this new agent, and was assimilated to its substance; nor is it any the more surprising that much, very much, that was foul and earthly and passionate, clung to it as an incongruous and offensive aggregation of human corruption. When the crystalline nucleus is suddenly introduced into a liquid of manifold ingredients, there shoots out from it not only many a transparent and well-shaped gem, but there gathers about its beautiful kernel a cumbrous accumulation of half-formed, ill-shapen, earth-stained, and deformed appendages, all feeling its influence, but doing little credit to the power which has so imperfectly organized them. The Christian history, if true, ought not to be held responsible for the pious frauds or the impious caricatures which soon appeared in its train. By their number and character, they illustrate the presence and power of some great force of actual personages and events such as this history records. Their falsehood and weakness do not attach to the truth under whose grand and majestic shadow they sought for patronage and protection.

The Christian history is still believed to be a true history by the great mass of men over whom Christiani-

ty is a controlling power. The majority of those who call themselves Christian worshippers, every time they assemble renew the profession of their faith in the leading facts which this history records. They listen, perhaps, to some extract from the narrative whose interest never tires. Every first day of the week is but a renewed proclamation of Easter, — that Christ did, in fact, rise from the dead. Every Christian prayer and song repeats this faith. Every child in a Christian household is first bewildered, and then elevated and entranced, by the sweet story of the Lord Christ, who was obedient to his parents, and dwelt in Nazareth, and, at twelve years old, was left alone in Jerusalem. Old age, when it tires of every thing else, and has had enough of this life, is never tired of the story that records the words that were spoken by Jesus. The land where this history was enacted is clothed by the imagination with singular attractions, because the Christian history is believed to be true. There are, indeed, a few exceptions to this assertion. There is, here and there, one who denies the history to be true, and yet claims to derive from it a more subtle essence and a more quickening energy than those who believe in its literal reality. The history is, to such, a husk, which they regard as of little value if they seize and prize the kernel. It is a beautiful parable, of which the moral alone is the jewel. Of such it is no less than charitable to affirm, that perhaps they know not whether they have finally and forever pronounced the story to be false: and it were no more than just to say, that the religious truth and moral life which they value as the only permanent truth of Christianity may be sustained for

them indirectly through the faith of the multitudes who still believe the story to be true; from whose faith in the risen Jesus they draw the life and love, the self-denial and the self-sacrifice, the patience and hope, which stimulate and sustain their own abstract and intellectual ethics, — their so-called Christian but Christless creed. Every man who lives in Christendom cannot but live in a temple where the history of Christ and the Christ of history are felt in ten thousand influences. He may turn his back upon the altar and its glorious rites; but he cannot escape the penetrating illumination that streams into every corner. The earth to him is far more green and beautiful, the heavens are more benign, the spring more full of hope, the summer more joyful, the autumn more sage, the winter more serene, man is more interesting, life is more sacred, death is more significant, the universe is more full of moral import, because Christ is believed to have visited the earth, and to have dwelt among men, and to have gone before to prepare a place for them in better dwellings. The thoughtful and refined who exclude Christ from history, and make him only a symbol, cannot, if they would, escape the influences with which the past and present faith of others in this history pervade and penetrate every fibre of their being.

It is questionable whether, if the Christian history were to cease to be believed, *the peculiar power of Christianity would not cease from the earth*. If the actual power of Christianity has, up to this time, been derived from a belief in this history as true, and if it is still thus sustained, the inference would seem to be legitimate, that, if this belief were withdrawn, the

power of Christianity would be greatly weakened or wholly destroyed. The inference is purely historical: it is founded on observation of the working of forces which have been seen to exist, and to be followed by certain results. Those who insist upon reasoning by induction, and who would confine themselves to the lessons taught by observed facts, cannot escape this conclusion.

A careful observation of facts compels the conclusion, that a hearty faith in the truth of the Christian history is attended with obedience to Christian principles and the exercise of those spiritual and ethical virtues which are distinctively Christian. Observation and history also compel the inference, that, if this faith should be weakened, the force would be withdrawn which has sustained the Christian life. The inference cannot be set aside by the reasoner who confines himself to history. He who claims that belief in the Christian history may be transient, while Christianity itself is permanent, must draw his proof from other than historic sources,—from the nature of Christianity as a system of truth. He must carry the discussion into a higher sphere. Into this sphere we are now prepared to enter.

2. We will next consider Christianity as truth or doctrine. Christianity is more than a history: it is also a system of truths. It enforces truth which might have been known without its aid, and it discovers truth which could not have been known without its communication. In both these relations, it has been most efficient. In both, its agency has been indispensable.

The distinction has been made between the facts

of Christianity and the truths of Christianity. We have ourselves observed this distinction in treating it, first as a history, and next as a doctrine. But, viewed more closely, its facts are doctrines. Every event which its history records either is a truth, or suggests a truth, or expresses a truth, which man needs to assent to or to put into practice. The appearance in history of such a person as Christ enforces the truth that God is love, and that he *so* loved the world. The healing of the sick by him is a proclamation of the divine sympathy; the raising the dead, an assertion and an enforcement of a God mightier than Nature, though Nature is bound fast in the laws which no one save He that is mightier than herself can unloose. His own rising from the dead declares that he has the prerogative to take again the life which he relinquished. His ascension is an assertion of his power and right to rule; and the presence of the Parakletos is the pledge that he cannot forget the earth which he once blessed with his presence, and the faithful men who trusted his word.

Christianity is also a doctrine in so far as Christ was a teacher. His followers were called disciples. He was continually plying them with parables and lessons concerning his new kingdom. When he sent them forth into the earth to tell the story of his life, that story included the many things which he had commanded them to be and to do. "To this end was I born," he affirms, "and for this end came I forth, that I might bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." He also claimed for himself a certain place in their faith and love; and here was a truth to be assented to. He called

himself, familiarly, the Son of man. He aspired without hesitation to the appellation of the Son of God. He called himself the Light of the world, the Bread of life, the Christ whom God had sent. Near the close of his life, he startled his disciples with the assertion, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Wherever we begin, — with the person of Christ, the work of Christ, or the promises of Christ, — we find some truth suggested, confirmed, or enforced. If we begin with his person, we are led into authorized inferences or unauthorized speculations concerning God, and Christ's relation to God before, during, and after his appearance upon the earth. If we consider his work, — whether in his life or death, or both, — we are beset by inquiries, which we are forced to attempt to answer, concerning man's need; and these open the Christian truth concerning sin, and man's deliverance; and this unfolds to us the truth concerning redemption. If we reflect on the promises of Christ, the doctrines of the purifying spirit, of perfected holiness, and of eternal life, claim our attention.

The truths that of themselves leap out of the Christian history must necessarily lead to thoughtful inquiry for comparison, adjustment, and method. The believing disciples, who received these truths with the history, would, of necessity, reflect on their mutual relations; would seek to define these relations with exactness and care, and to arrange the results in a coherent and consistent system. As a consequence and result of these efforts, there came into being, first, a brief symbol, or creed, the shortest and simplest of which must do something more than recite the leading

facts of the history, and add some small admixture of doctrine. Next followed the catechism, in which the simplest propositions of what should be believed were prepared for the use of children and catechumens. Then proceeded more or less elaborate systems of doctrine, in which the attempt was made carefully to define the truths of the creed, to reconcile them with one another and with the accepted knowledge of the times. Oftentimes this was done with an imperfect or a false philosophy, after an irrational method, and by proofs that were extracted out of the Scriptures by capricious, violent, and utterly illogical methods of interpretation. In this way, and by such a process, there grew out of Christianity as truth what is called Christian theology, which is a legitimate and necessary development of this truth after the methods of human science.

In this theology there has been much inexactness, many over-statements, an abundance of fanciful reasoning and imaginative deductions, arising out of the ignorance and error of the men who framed its several systems. Attack and defence have led to controversy; controversy, to bitterness of feeling; and uncharitable denunciation, to sectarian divisions and partisan bigotry. The presumptuous effort to frame an extended scientific statement of Christian truth which would be good for all generations, and could be enforced in every particular upon large classes of believers till the end of time, has led to innumerable evils, upon which Christianity itself has at times almost foundered, and in the re-action against which the sacredness and importance of any truth and of any fixed belief have been almost abandoned. The

scientific interest in theology has often overborne and displaced the practical. The catechism and the doctrinal system, some single phrase or often-repeated term out of which the meaning had died, has been exalted in place of the personal Redeemer; has become an idol for superstitious worship, or a war-cry for the bitterest and the meanest of personal and sectarian hostilities. The ambassador between God and man, who was sent to reconcile man to life and to God, has spent all his life in expounding the scientific relations of certain disputed points in theology. As a consequence, the way of life has not only been narrow as at the first, but it has been drawn out into a maze of entangling paths, each beset with sharp thorns: even the clew that should conduct through the maze has been as abstract and intricate as a knot of mathematical formulæ. As a consequence of these perversions and excesses, Christian theology has often fallen into disrepute and dishonor. It has even been boldly questioned, and by Christian philosophers, whether a human science of divine and infinite truth were possible; whether the attempt to reduce to finite statements what is known or knowable of Christian truth were not of itself certain to fail. However this may be, the attempt to do this is legitimate and necessary. Every generation renews it, and every society of Christian believers accepts some of its results.

Notwithstanding all these excesses and mistakes, Christianity is a series of truths upon which its power and dignity depend,—truths which it implies, enforces, or reveals. It implies the being and holiness of a personal God; it manifests and impresses him as a forgiving Father, who sympathizes with and seeks

to reclaim his wandering children ; it implies and enforces the fact and the evil of personal guilt, which, if persisted in, must separate the guilty creature from the equitable and guiltless Creator ; it manifests Christ as the Saviour from sin with all its evils. Among these evils, none is more prominent than its self-propagating and progressive power, involving discouragement and despair. Against this it provides the promised aid and help of a divine agency that encourages and assists the human spirit to confidence and victory. It enforces and reveals all these truths by the constant manifestation of the supernatural as an agency above the laws and above the forces of mere Nature, but which neither disturbs nor interrupts the harmony or order of a universe in which a personal God and impersonal law can never be in conflict.

3. Christianity is a life. Its history is not enacted as a mysterious or attractive spectacle ; its truth is not enforced in order to satisfy human curiosity, or to enlarge human knowledge in respect to the infinite and the unseen : but both history and truth look forward to the life which they will awaken and perfect in the soul of man and in every human relation. Christianity is not a story to be gazed at and admired ; it is not a scene to gratify the æsthetic sentiments, nor a fable to furnish unmatched themes for art : but it is a history to enforce or reveal important truth. This truth is not made known to further the ends of science, or to meet the intellectual longings of the soul as it looks over into the abyss of the Infinite ; but Christianity, both as history and doctrine, is given to mould the character and to serve the ends of life. “ I am come

that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." "Many other signs did Jesus; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through his name." Christianity requires that its history be believed as true. Its message to the world is, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom he hath sent." "He that believeth shall be saved." But it is not satisfied with the most undoubting conviction that the history is true, and the boldest defence and confession of one's faith before infidel or Jew: it requires, also, that the truths which it declares shall be believed. But it is not satisfied with the exactest and the most comprehensive orthodoxy of creed, which goes no further. A correct theology considered by itself, and as a mere science, is no more acceptable than a correct theory of the heavens. Both history and theology are only valuable when applied to their use, and made to elevate and transform the life.

The example of Christ is given to be our pattern and inspiration. "To this end are ye called, that ye should follow his steps." "The disciple is not above his Master." His work was designed to give that pardon and peace to the guilty which are life within the ribs of death; to add help and courage, which are life begun a second time in hope. His promises assure his followers of a life to come which is worthy to be called eternal. Every believing man who has commenced the Christian life says, "This is life indeed: I have never truly lived before." Whoever he may be, whether his life in Christ is gently interfused and developed with the dawning of childhood, or whether

its beginning is sharply contrasted with a godless and profane career till high noon ; whether he is won by Christ's gentleness, or frightened by his rebukes,—to live to Christ and for Christ is to live indeed. The more completely and consistently a believer lives his human life as animated and controlled by Christ, the more intense and satisfactory is his life on earth ; and, when he emerges beneath those portals which open the blessed land to his amazed senses, he exclaims with completed satisfaction, “ This is eternal life ! ”

Christianity is not only life to the individual, but it gives life to human society. It refines its manners ; it perfects its civilization ; it renders its laws more just, and their administration more perfect ; it fosters and popularizes education ; it furnishes inspiration to art, and taste to its admirers. Its ethics are broad enough to meet every exigency, and minute enough to let none escape. They are progressive enough to keep pace with any advance of culture or civilization, and tolerant enough to be charitable to every offence that comes of ignorance or barbarism.

Its comprehensive, final aim is the moral and spiritual perfection of the race, and all that such perfection involves in the reformation of human society and the refinement of human culture. To this, as its sole and controlling end, its history and its truth are completely subjected ; from this they derive all their importance and their interest.

Thus far have we considered these three conspicuous aspects of Christianity as actually co-existing in the same religious system.

II. We proceed to inquire how far they go to prove

that the system in which they are united is superhuman in its features, and supernatural in its origin. In doing this, we shall consider the claims of each by itself as a datum of proof; also each in concurrence with the other; and, most of all, each as supplemented by or dependent upon the other.

1. We begin with Christianity as a history. The unmatched superiority of this history is manifest, if we consider its matter. On the supposition that this story might possibly be true, it is ideally perfect, —so perfect as to strike us as superhuman. It being conceded that the incarnation and the resurrection are possible, we are ready to say at once, that the history is in every particular what we might expect or ought to require it to be. The life of Jesus, if he were the Son of God, could not have been improved, whether we regard him as Reformer, Teacher, Example, or God manifest in the flesh. In his modest reserve respecting his origin, his higher nature, his destiny, and his kingdom; in his skill and patience with his disciples; in his mingled condescension and rebuke; in his conflicts with his bigoted and sanctimonious antagonists; in his conduct at Lazarus' tomb, and towards Lazarus' sisters; in his trial before Greek and Roman rulers; in his parting scene with his panic-stricken followers; in his majestic yet agonizing submission to death; in his kingly attitude upon the cross; in his lonely resurrection; in the reserve and dignity of his subsequent intercourse with his disciples; in the walk towards Emmaus; in his half-sad, half-ironical reproof of Thomas; in his kindly thought and prayer for all believers in all future time, —there is all that we require in such a history,

if it could be conceived to be possible, and attested as true.

It is sufficiently attested, provided its matter be accepted as possible. Upon this point we have already enlarged. The considerations adverted to warrant the assertion, that, if the supernatural events recorded in this story suggested no ground of improbability, the history would stand foremost in the perfection, if not in the variety, of its attestations. That this improbability cannot be set aside by simple historical evidence, we shall show in its place. The absence of a confirmation which history cannot overcome is therefore no blemish to the perfection of the history, when it is regarded as a history.

The superhuman character of the matter of the history is, in a certain sense, rendered historically probable from the difficulty of accounting for the origination of this history unless it were true. What artist could depict the portrait of Christ if there had been no reality from which to copy? The invention of such a character — combining so many seemingly incompatible elements, and uttering seemingly inconsistent and paradoxical claims for his person and his kingdom — is itself a superhuman product which the historical critic cannot account for on purely natural principles, because, in avoiding one form of the supernatural, he must resort to another. The supernatural which he would shun on the one hand is the existence of the reality: but, in explaining this away, he supposes an hypothesis which is even more difficult to receive; i.e., he accepts a supernatural which is still more incredible, — the fact that it was invented.

We notice, also, the weaving-together of the natu-

ral and the supernatural in a union so intimate, and by arts so dexterous, that the two cannot easily be separated. The historical critic has sought again and again to eliminate the supernatural from the natural, and what he calls the probable; but he has never done it with success, so skilfully are the two intertwined. The boldest and most ingenious of such efforts have failed.

Then, again, the belief in history has wrought with mighty power upon the course of human events. If the historical critic cannot admit the miraculous into the chain of acknowledged historic causes, he is at least competent to assert two facts: first, that no other effects like those wrought by the force of the Christian story were ever wrought by any other known natural or historic causes, or any combination of such causes; and, second, that it is not easy (indeed it is impossible by any historic or natural causes) to explain how the belief in the supernatural mission and resurrection of Christ could originate, and act from the first with such potent energy.

Thus far have we considered the superhuman features of the history as history. We notice, next, its superhuman combination with doctrines, and its superhuman subservience to duty and life.

Concerning the superiority of this history as an illustration of religious truth, we need only refer to the fact, that many who reject it as a true history concede and contend that it came into being by the force of doctrine; that it was the product and growth of the absolute religion, which, in the mind of Jesus or the minds of his admiring disciples, — in either or in both, — wrought out for itself this supernatural his-

tory as a perfect allegory, a romantic dream symbolizing truth, a myth, or a legend; and then accepted or proclaimed it as true because it was so appropriate as a symbol. Of the life of Jesus, it is universally conceded that the proverb is eminently appropriate, "If the story is not true, it is well invented."

Others express it thus: The story is the unconscious product of the spirit of humanity shaping to itself a symbol for the expression of its religious faiths and aspirations. So perfect is it for these uses, that it is conceded by all, except some exceedingly audacious aspirant for the extremest opinions, that this history is not likely soon to be superseded by another. It is usually declared, that religion and art will, for a long time to come, find in the personage and events of this marvellous symbolic story all that either may require, either to impress or express the truths, the faiths, or the ideals which either may attain or develop.

As a means of ethical enforcement and inspiration, this history is equally extraordinary. No examples of human duty and perfection have ever yet been furnished which are at once so instructive and so moving as those which this history records. No stories of human duty and self-sacrifice are more instructive and more animating than the stories which Christ taught in parable and precept, and himself enacted in his life. The parables of the Good Samaritan, of the unjust steward, of the wise and foolish virgins, of the woman that was a sinner, of the unforgiving creditor; the Sermon on the Mount; above all, the Christ who healed the sick, and who counselled and spake forgiveness; who pleased not himself; who went about doing good; who loved his own to the

end ; who prayed at Gethsemane ; who meekly endured Caiaphas and the frantic Sanhedrim ; who did not smite the treacherous Judas ; who looked so lovingly upon the faithless Peter ; who prayed on the cross, "Father, forgive them," and commended his mother to the beloved disciple, — are all teachings and enforcements of duty which neither history nor fable in the literature of the world has as yet surpassed, and which are more effective than any and all other precepts and motives which the world as yet has witnessed or produced.

2. We take up, next, Christianity as truth. What are its chief or essential truths we shall not stay to inquire. For our argument, it would be sufficient to assert that it both teaches and enforces the personality of God, the responsibility of man, and the certainty and importance of a future life. We believe that it also teaches more than this, making prominent the guilt and helplessness of man, and the need and the provision of Christ as a Redeemer ; and that from these truths, and what they involve, are derived the most convincing arguments for its superhuman origin. Our argument has full force, however, for those who assume that it teaches less.

What we chiefly insist on is, not that the knowledge or the communication of these truths is superhuman ; but the fact that Christianity teaches such truths solely by means of history, and solely for an ethical end, evinces a supernatural skill and superhuman wisdom.

These truths are not taught as a science either in form or method. There are no scholastic propositions, and few logical arguments, in the teachings of Chris-

tianity. There is little abstract language, and few precise definitions. The teachings are usually simple and comprehensive utterances; and the arguments, with few exceptions, are level to the common understanding. Many of the declarations are couched in bold and striking figures. Not a few of the truths are stated and brought home by simple parables. Many are declared in a language that is more striking even than parable or metaphor, and enforced by considerations which no eloquence of speech could urge,—the language of deeds that convince and arouse, the argument of facts that impress and win. The pitying and rebuking Saviour, the raised Lazarus, the crucified and risen Christ, express and enforce truths as no teacher in any other school has ever expressed and enforced them.

And yet, in the truths that Christ uttered and enacted, there are the materials for extensive systems of scientific thought. Most of these truths are capable of taking a place in the most intricate and profound of sciences. Now, what is remarkable in Christianity is, that these germinant and productive scientific truths are not given at all in any scientific form, but are either stated in simple and popular diction, or are left to be inferred from the tremendous facts which suggest them. In other words, what is most extraordinary in Christianity, what is itself superhuman, and well might prove the system to be divine, is not so much the doctrines that it makes known, as the fact that these doctrines are taught by history.

In this is made conspicuous an adaptation to the wants of all men, in all conditions of existence, such as none but a divine forecast could have provided.

Scarce a human being is so simple, scarce a generation is so uncultured, to whom some fact of this history may not suggest and enforce its leading truths. No individual, and no generation, has as yet been so cultured, that these truths have not served as problems and suggesters of whole systems of philosophic inquiry.

But it is not intimated that such results are possible. The truths are taught and enacted for practical effect alone. If God is revealed as a Spirit, it is that we may worship him in spirit and in truth; not that the speculations of mere curiosity respecting the possibility of an Infinite Spirit, and of his relations to the finite, may be excited or put to rest. If men are convinced of guilt and danger, it is not that they may speculate about either, but that they may repent, and be reformed. If Christ is set forth to them as a Deliverer, it is not that they may perfect a science respecting his person or his work, but that they may believe and obey him.

Again: the truths which Christianity reiterates and enforces vindicate and justify the supernatural element in its history. They are its only possible vindication. Separate from these truths, this part of the story is so highly improbable, as, for all practical purposes, to be viewed as incredible; but connected with such truths, and judged by the importance and necessity that these truths should be revealed and impressed, the supernatural, in the form and manner in which it is made known, becomes not only credible, but probable. Being thus established, when it forms a part of a history that is otherwise well attested, it not only removes all objections to the reception of

the history, but it strengthens it as a history. When, in addition, the presence of the supernatural, thus accredited as true history, furnishes the only satisfactory explanation of events which are known to be historically true, — events the most extraordinary, wide-reaching, and long-enduring of any known to history, — events which are confessedly difficult to be explained by any known historic force, — the supernatural borrows confirmation from, as well as furnishes the explanation to, the whole course of modern civilization and the history of Christendom and the Christian Church. To faith in miracle, doctrines and history must combine. In Christianity, doctrine and history do combine, so as to compel the belief that the Christian miracles are possible and real.

Christianity assumes and affirms as truth a personal God, who is above the Nature which he creates and animates, and with respect to which he is himself supernatural. He that believes in such a God must believe that a miracle is possible, even in the extremest form in which it may appear, — the form of original creation. Christianity, moreover, assumes and declares that the moral necessities of men are such as to justify the use of miraculous agency. These necessities are various. The human race need to be impressed with the reality of God's being and agency. They need to be assured of the reality and earnestness of his moral rule as well as of his readiness to forgive and to purify. They need to be confronted with one of their kind who has died and lived again. They require that all these truths should be enforced to their wonder as facts of startling energy, and should be warmed for their hearts by the glow of divine

affection. These necessities are justifying reasons for the use of supernatural energy. Our faith in the breach of Nature's laws on extraordinary occasions, for a sufficient end, is, in principle, identical with our faith in the uniform and inflexible observance of these laws on occasions that are common. In the same faith, we require that miracles should not often be repeated; that, having fulfilled their design in introducing new facts and new truths and a new force into human history, it is neither to be expected nor desired that they should be either cheap, commonplace, or contemptible.

Christianity, then, as truth, proves Christianity to be superhuman: first, because the truths themselves are, some of them, such as man could not, and others of them are such as he would not, attain of himself; secondly, because the most important and peculiar of them, though wide-reaching and general, and capable of being expanded into a science that is profound and recondite, are presented to the race, not as doctrines, but as facts, — not in the forms of science, but simply as history; and, last of all, because they are such in their nature and adaptations as to justify the acceptance of a supernatural history itself as probable and true, which would otherwise be improbable and incredible. Thus Christianity as history declares and enforces Christianity as doctrine; and Christianity as doctrine makes credible Christianity as a history. Thus whatever independent and separate claims Christianity may assert as a history are made doubly strong by the separate claims of Christianity as doctrine. The union of the two more than doubles the strength of either; the mutual dependence of the two gives to their union an organic power.

3. We pass next to Christianity as a life. This concerns three particulars, — the aim or ideal of life, the rules for attaining this ideal, and the inspiration which impels to its realization. Here we notice that the ideal of a perfect human life and a perfect human being, proposed by Christianity, is more comprehensive, more elevated, and more symmetrical, than any that was distinctly conceived by man before. It is an ideal which it has not been easy to appreciate and reach since it was taught and exemplified by Christ himself. The ancients thought very earnestly, and, in a sense, very honestly, upon this ideal. They sought to know what was involved in the conception of a perfect human being. But their wisest sages reached nothing higher than the general and rather abstract result, that it involved a life according to the nature of man, or according to the wisdom of the gods. What such a life purported they did not so clearly discern. They taught, indeed, that, for the man himself, it involved self-control first and chiefest of all, in order that neither the appetites nor the passions should disturb the inward serenity of the well-poised man. Next, so far as others were concerned, it required justice; principally that the social harmony might not be disturbed; that the organized state, the outward symbol and enlargement of the individual man, might always retain its well-balanced equilibrium. The Stoics, at the latest period of their development, looked beyond the state, and had some dawning sense, in the abstract, of a fellow-man as an equal, and of the state as a more limited reflex of the greater commonwealth of the human race. But no ancient school, nor all the ancient

schools united, had reached the conception of that self-sacrificing love which is the crowning and comprehensive grace of Christ's perfect man, and of the easy subjection of the passions and appetites to the controlling spirit of this love. The grateful and loving charity which Christ proposed, and which Paul enjoined, had no place in the world's ideals of perfection, except in the Jewish and Christian schools; and it was only in the latter that it was consistently developed and adequately conceived.

If the ancient systems failed in their general conception of human perfection, much more did they fail in the special directions which they laid down for its realization. The particular virtues which Christianity recognizes so positively and uncompromisingly — as humility, patience, modesty, tolerance, sympathy, forgiveness of injury, kindness to those who persecute and insult us, and even prayer for them — were scarcely conceived of as virtues by the most advanced of the ancients; or, if some one or two were conceived of as good, it was rather as signs of a serene and self-poised nature than as the varied manifestations of divine charity. The self-sufficing happiness that is connected by Christ with losing the life for the good of others was not so much as dreamed of till Christ proposed it as the reward of all his disciples, and sanctioned and hallowed it by his life and his death.

If we look at ethics as a science, or a well-grounded and comprehensive system of special duties, we find that neither in the profoundness nor the reach of their principles do any or all of the best of the pagan systems approach in point of excellence to the system that may be derived from the apparently

disjoined teachings of the New Testament. Neither the "Nicomachean Ethics" of Aristotle nor the "De Officiis" of Cicero present so many profound, scientific principles which provide for so many particular duties, or admit of such wide and varied applications, as the unstudied and unarranged sayings of Christ and Paul. The comprehension of all human duties under two rules — each a different application of love — is an example of generalization, which, in matter and form, is beyond any attainment of the ancient ethics. Indeed, as we have already said, the duty of love to man as man was never enforced as a supreme and universal duty, — much less was it accepted as a scientific axiom. The requirement that this love should control the inner man, and become the spring of all the special affections, and the application of it to the most trying of duties, at any cost, was so original as to incur the astonished derision of the schools. The duty of toleration for differences of moral judgments in respect to external action was not so much as dreamed of, either for its practical wisdom or for its scientific value.

The sentences of Epictetus and the meditations of Antoninus, in their practical spirit, are stiff, constrained, and selfish, when contrasted with the easy, gentle, plastic, and loving temper that enlivens and warms the practical philosophy of the Gospels and Epistles.

Whence came this system of ethics, unsurpassed for philosophical and practical excellence, which is yet without philosophical form, which has never yet been outgrown, which seems so simple and obvious, but

which has proved so hard to comprehend, and so much harder to apply? If it did not claim to be from God, if the Great Teacher had asserted for himself claims no higher than were reported of Socrates or Numa, we should not find it so very irrational to say, that, in some sense, he was superhuman in his knowledge of human duty, simply because his intuitions upon the subject allow no comparison in their number, their reach, and their consistency, with those which have been attained by any other human being. But, when he himself claims a superhuman position and authority, how shall we treat this direct and positive claim, which had almost been suggested of itself, had it not been asserted by him? Shall we believe it the less because it is self-asserted? or shall we deny that he knows what he would say of himself, when he asserts truths so many and so profound concerning human duty and the supreme good? Shall we say that he is false in what he says of himself? How can we, when he points to his teachings, and declares with such serene and quiet confidence, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away," and adds, "I know whence I came, and whither I go;" "Though I bear witness of myself, my witness is true"?

But we do not rest our argument here. We seek to show that the Christian ethics prove the superhuman origin of Christianity, not alone by their intrinsic superiority as a system of ethics, but from their relation to the Christian doctrine and the Christian history. It is because these unmatched ethics are also enforced by the Christian doctrines, and vitalized by the Christian history, that their superiority is mani-

festly supernatural and divine. The duties which Christianity teaches are all directly enjoined by its truths. Every truth which Christianity declares is also a motive to the performance of some duty. What God is, and what God wills ; what God is now doing, and what he will do in the future state of being ; what man is in his needs and guilt, and what God has done, and how he feels in respect to his help and his pardon, — are every one of them powerful reasons why man should seek after ethical perfection. “ Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,” is the comprehensive application of its whole moral code. “ Love your enemies ; bless them that curse you : that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven ; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.” “ Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters, as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.” “ Ye are all the children of light : therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober.” “ The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” There is not a single truth which Christianity reveals which is not also a motive to Christian duty. The Christian ethics, thus re-enforced, are not only a system of rules : they are also an aggregate of motives. Christianity does not simply give wise and ample directions of what we are to do ; but it furnishes us the moving power. It does not merely command and forbid ; but it

enkindles inspiration. Hence is it that Christianity is a life. It is because the Christian ethics are religious and spiritual that they outshine every other. The ancient systems had no such excellence as this. It was only in the most general way that the theology of the ancients aided its morality. While there was, doubtless, an undefined faith that the heavens and the gods were on the side of the right, this general faith was contradicted and weakened by most of the details which the prevailing theology taught of the character and administration of the gods; and thus religion was not only dissevered from morality, but was often its deadliest enemy. What is sometimes loosely urged against the Christian ethics, that they are also religious, is their completing excellence. They not only carefully enjoin duties to God, and make them spiritual, but they derive the motive to all duties whatever from what we know of God. The ancient ethics, whether Platonic or Stoic, derived the matter and the authority of their precepts from the nature of man as fulfilling the designs, and as thus honoring the wisdom, of the higher powers. They never invested virtue with the interest which it has when regarded as the rendering of a grateful service to the loving Father in heaven, as a voluntary imitation of the divine perfections, as a cheerful and confiding submission to the divine appointments, as an honest and steady obedience to God's expressed will, or as a life of tender devotion to the redeeming Saviour. The Christian ethics do all this, and even more.

As Christian truth gives its morality enforcement and inspiration, Christian history gives it vitality. We not only receive the precepts of our Teacher, but

we read his life as our example. He not only instructs us as to what we should be and do by precepts and words, but he exemplifies it by what he himself was and did. Christ not only declares what it is to be a perfect man, but he was himself a perfect man, and, in being such, made his precepts concrete and intelligible by acting them out, as well as warm and winning by showing himself the friend of those whom he would guide. The Great Teacher in the Christian school is himself all that he tells his pupils that they ought to be. He never says "Go," but always "Come." Nay, he does not so much say "Come" as himself performs that which he desires we should imitate: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." "If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. The servant is not greater than his lord."

What power was there in the Christian history to excite to Christian virtue, as its passages of the self-denying tenderness of the Master were recalled after his crucifixion, and interpreted by the radiance that streamed from the throne to which he had so recently risen! No sane man can doubt, no historic critic dares or wishes to deny, that nothing less than such a faith in Christ as once perfect as a man, and now exalted to be Lord, could have quenched the lusts, and scorched the pride, and shamed the selfishness, and consumed the barriers of fashion, law, and religion, within which all these had intrenched themselves. If this history were a fiction, the world has still need of the same falsehood; and to have dreamed or invented this falsehood to do the work of truth argues a wit more than human with a simplicity that is

less than idiotic. What power might there not be in this same history, for all time, if it were always read with a simple and fervent belief in its truth! The Christian life, if acted out at present with the fervor and the loving spirit to which the Christian doctrine and the Christian history both inspire, would be itself an argument for the divine origin of the Christian system, which would dispense with every other.

Regarded in theory only, the fact that the life which Christianity teaches and inspires is enforced by all its truths, and is also re-enforced by its matchless history, increases immensely the improbability that it should be of human origin; and increases the probability, in the same proportion, that it is supernatural and divine.

Here we end our argument. We restate it thus: Christianity claims to be a supernatural product; and it enforces its claim by its superhuman excellence as a history, a doctrine, and a life. Each one of these features, considered alone, substantiates this claim; the union of these three features in the same system makes the argument stronger; the inter-dependence of the three, each giving and receiving strength from the other, unites them in an organic union, which makes the argument invincible and complete. It is indeed a threefold cord, which is not quickly broken.

III. This conclusion is confirmed by a review of the attempts which are made by the rejecters of supernatural Christianity to dispose of each of these heads of proof.

1. Not a few of those who reject Christianity as a history do it by first rejecting Christianity as a system

of truth. But, in rejecting Christianity as a doctrine, they are unable to explain it as a history. The argument against the supernatural in the history often takes one of the following forms : A miracle is impossible because the laws of Nature are inviolable : therefore no record of history, however amply fortified and attested, can be believed, if it declares that a miracle has in fact been wrought. This position is taken by the Pantheists of every school and shade of opinion, whether of the gross or literal school, who make the Deity, or the Absolute, one with the essence or the forces of the universe, or the more refined logico-metaphysical type, who exalt law as higher than God, and practically subject him to fate. The second form is that assumed by those who so far deny or weaken the truths of Christianity as to bring them within the easy and practical reach of mankind without the enforcement of miracles or the agency of the supernatural Christ. These last admit that miracles are theoretically possible ; but they deny any sufficient occasion for their occurrence. They “cannot believe such facts on such evidence,” because, in their view, there is no sufficient reason, in the truths that are made known, or in the necessities of those to whom they are taught, to justify so remarkable a deviation from the fixed and eternal laws of the universe.

On either supposition, the history is rejected for doctrinal or scientific reasons ; and it is very properly rejected if either of these reasons holds good. If a miracle is impossible in the nature of things, or if there is not a sufficient reason why a miracle should be wrought, every narrative which records a miracle is incredible. We do not object to the inference, nor

to its application to the Christian history, if its premises are true: we only call attention to the arguments on which this history is questioned or denied.

The conclusion to which a process of reasoning conducts may often lead a man to question the correctness of some one or more of the premises. A conclusion which it is very difficult to explain on any other than one supposition may well make us pause before we accept it in the form of a logical inference from some assumed datum. The rejecter of the supernatural Christian history is not released from all further responsibility because he chooses to assert that a miracle is impossible, or that the alleged occasion does not justify its employment. The Christian history exists, and is well attested as a history. How came it into being if its matter is not true? How came it to be believed by so many intelligent and honest men, and with such force and energy of faith as to gain large accessions, at a rapid rate, against such fearful odds of opposition, and at such costly sacrifices? Did Christ believe that he was the Messiah, the Teacher of the ages, the future Master of human thought, the perpetual Ruler of human opinion, the Judge coming in the clouds of heaven, the King of a spiritual kingdom which was to begin like leaven, and to extend, like leaven, to the end of time? If he did not believe these claims, how came any one to believe them, and especially to put them into his mouth, and to connect them with a character, which, whether a fact or a fancy, was so truthful and perfect as his? Did Christ rise from the dead? If not, how came the disciples to believe that he did, and so early, and with such assured confidence as not

to be able to refrain from asserting it? Or, to sum up all in one, how came the Christian history to be first reported, and then to be written, if it were wholly or partially false? These are questions which no man can avoid the responsibility of attempting to answer by simply asserting that his philosophy forbids him to believe that the miraculous is possible, or, in this particular case, was required. They are questions which it is very difficult to answer on the theory that denies or dispenses with the supernatural. Strauss labored earnestly and long to construct and defend a plausible theory of the origin of this history from his doctrinal basis. Baur labored with greater learning to defend another. Renan has tried another, very unlike that of either. Schenkel has essayed another. But this history still lifts up its calm and quiet voice, and points to the position which its facts took so early, and the force which they have exerted so long, as forces and effects which are hard to be accounted for without the supernatural. The affluent imagination of a quick-minded thinker may suggest a theory which will satisfy a hasty inspection of the facts. An abundant reader of the histories of religion will find no difficulty in suggesting a few parallels to the character and claims of Jesus, as in Socrates and other ethical and religious geniuses around whose names and doctrines has been gathered an extraordinary splendor; but the difficulty is obstinate, that the parallels do not readily strike cool and honest heads, and somehow do not satisfy and hold the mind. The cases are so unlike, that the sober judgment of discerning men is more offended by the audacity of the attempt to group under a single class, or refer to a common cause, objects

and effects so unlike, than it is convinced by the alleged points of resemblance, however eloquently they are expressed, or splendidly they are embellished. The points of resemblance are made the most of; the points of difference in kind and degree are quietly omitted; or the attention is withdrawn by a purple haze of epithets that hinders sharp discrimination, or by a cool effrontery of assertion that for a moment paralyzes, because it shocks the understanding. The skilled rhetorician, and the admired leader of an admiring circle, may coolly couple Jesus with other great men, and condescendingly allow, that, bating here and there some slight foibles, Jesus does, on the whole, stand the highest of all; but all the advantages which his brilliance of diction and sagacious effrontery bring to his service do not enable him to explain who Jesus was, and how his story came to be written. The expectants of what they call original thoughts from every quarter, save one, wait from week to week for some new revelation from the oracle of their circle, if possibly something may have occurred to his brilliant originality which shall settle forever these puzzling questions; but the last weekly bulletin has not yet met the inquiry, how Jesus managed to acquire and retain so extraordinary an influence over mankind, if he were not the supernatural Christ which the history represents him to have been.

Meantime this same history is as attractive and as powerful as ever to those who read it with open mind. It even manages to hold with a strange fascination of unsolved mystery the men to whom it is an enigma, a splendid myth, a dream of elevated aspirations, or a very pardonable exaggeration. They draw near to it

again and again, still fixing upon it their bewildered gaze, ever seeking and never finding how this sole and singular phenomenon, this puzzle and problem of historic criticism, this offence to what is called culture and science, may somehow or other be satisfactorily disposed of.

Whatever else may be true of this great question, we may confidently assert that the demonstrated or assumed impossibility of the supernatural has not yet set aside the claims of the Christian history as history.

2. Others assail Christianity as truth from the side of history. They tell us that the supernatural vanishes from the page of all history when it is read by the instructed and penetrating eye of the new historical criticism. It is not requisite, they say, that we raise any questions of philosophy or theology, it is sufficient for us to read the Christian story as critics, to be forced to reject the supernatural in it. And how do they read it to such a conclusion? They read it thus: "It is universally observed, that, as men become enlightened, they dismiss all belief in the miraculous. The stories of ghosts and fairies are abandoned when the race leaves its childhood. Legends and myths are uniformly connected with great heroes, and great lawgivers, and great religious geniuses, by their admiring or reverent successors and disciples. Later generations do not honor these personages the less when they divest their memory and their names of such adventitious honors and attractions, and render them the rational homage which is due to their well-grounded claims. The analogies of history itself force us to conclude that the miraculous in the Christian history is false, and justify us in explaining this part of the

narrative by some agency of high moral and religious significance; in this case by the personal force of Christ, who was a great moral and religious power in his generation, — so great, that around him there gathered extraordinary conceptions and beliefs of his divine original and power: or perhaps they were awakened and accepted in his own fervid imagination." This is the attempted solution of the history on grounds of history alone.

Let us concede that it may be correct, if we limit our view to Christianity as history. But Christianity is more than a story of miraculous deeds: it is a system of truths relating to God and man, to holiness and sin, to moral ruin and moral recovery. Some of these truths are taught by words; others are revealed and enforced by deeds. These truths not only meet more wants, and satisfy more longings, and still more fears, and awaken more hopes, and diffuse more satisfying peace, than any other truths that ever were uttered or conceived, but they are uttered in a form so popular as would seem to be the product of consummate art, were it not the natural outgrowth of unconscious simplicity. They are so wrought into the structure of this touching history as to transfigure its narrations into a series of parables and symbols, each of which seems invented for the sole purpose of illustrating these truths. They are so enforced by the most affecting manifestations of sincerity and tenderness as to have come home to the souls of myriads of simple and unlettered human beings with constraining power. They have been the springs of the best actions, and the inspiration of the best lives, of multitudes of human beings, even when they have been encumbered with

the metaphysics of the schools, and deformed by unworthy adjuncts of superstition, and corrupted through base admixtures of human invention. Whence came this wonderful system of truths? Who contrived its well-adjusted adaptations to the human soul? How was it so dexterously wrought into the history, and expressed so perfectly, so aptly, and so powerfully, by the persons and events which it describes? Let it be granted that the miracle of deeds may be explained away from the history. How can the miracle of doctrine be explained which springs forth from every page of it; which makes "the gospel the power of God unto salvation;" and which justifies the promise, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God"? To these questions, and the problems which they suggest, historical analogies about a necessary subsidence of the faith in the miraculous with the advance of reason and science, and warnings against excess of credulity, can only avail except with minds that show the extreme of credulity in the facile acceptance of the extemporized surmises of rash critics, the brilliant parallels of daring romancers, and the cool audacities of positive dogmatists.

Christianity as a life also must be accounted for and explained, even if the history is a gross exaggeration or a falsehood. A new style of character comes into the world at the date of this history and the enforcement of these doctrines,—a type of human feeling and action which was never known before in such purity and energy; which goes from heart to heart, and city to city, like a life-giving breeze; which hallows the family, suppresses human passion, and purifies society;

which makes life sacred, and death triumphant; which introduces into all human relations principles and motives that have wrought and still work like leaven, and the power of which to work in new forms of society, and to impel to every kind and degree of human progress, shows no tokens of exhaustion or limitation. How is it that the reality and the springs of Christianity as a life are to be explained? Is it said, the great central Teacher dreamed the false history was true, and taught and acted these ingenious and powerful doctrines concerning God and man in some ecstatic maze, and inspired humanity with this new life under the excitement of a divine madness, — an inspiration which is akin to the insanity of a great genius? But this genius was a genius of religion, and this implies reverence and self-distrust; a genius in morality, and this prescribes cool and self-scrutinizing integrity, and rigorous and exact veracity.

Verily, they who believe that this doctrine was wrought into a history which itself was never transacted in its nobler passages, but was dreamed out of common prose into such powerful poesy as to give force and energy to an ethics that has never been outgrown, are themselves mad with the intoxication of a seething brain, or ill-digested reading, or brilliant phantasy. It is not surprising that in their madness there should be so little method.

3. Others assail Christianity as a life; aiming in this way to weaken or destroy its authority as truth, and its credibility as a history. Their argument is effective if it can be made good; for if the ethical and spiritual result for which Christianity professes to have been given is not good, and wholly good, there

is no reason that God should provide it by superhuman methods, or that man should receive it as a supernatural gift. While its life may have been good for its time, and even better than any other, yet, if it is not good for all time, it must give way to that which is better. The machinery by which it was introduced must likewise have been evolved by an agency which was neither divine nor supernatural. Such is the real intent and bearing of all these attacks upon Christianity as a life.

It is difficult to comprehend them all under a brief description. They naturally group themselves under the three classes of attacks upon the Christian ideal of life, upon the Christian rules of life, and the Christian motives to life. By a few writers, all these features of the Christian ethics are assailed.

We ought for a moment to notice those philosophers who hold any so-called scientific views of the nature of the human soul, or of the sources of human knowledge, which are inconsistent with human responsibility, and consequently with any scientific doctrine of ethical or spiritual life. All materialists come under this class; so do all philosophical necessitarians; and so do those who make morality to be a mere result of the laws of association, or the factitious product of psychical development, whether by means of brain growths and molecular accretions, or under the operation of growths and conjunctions that are purely psychical. Those do the same who make moral and spiritual feeling to be dependent solely on social conditions. Mr. Huxley, Mr. John Stuart Mill, Prof. Alexander Bain, and Mr. Herbert Spencer, must of necessity reject all Christian ideals of duty and of liv-

ing, because they provide for no morality that is not factitious and conventional. They are not the scientific antagonists of the Christian morality alone, but of all high morality: their science not only excludes the authority of the Christian law of duty, but of every law of duty whatsoever, and even of the law of honor and of self-respect: it not only undermines the public faith in the Christian history and the Christian doctrine, but in the ethical authority of the civil magistrate and of a fixed public opinion. But with these indirect consequences of speculative systems we are not required at present to concern ourselves.

We have first to do with those, who, in the name of a so-called better ethics and more elevated life, depreciate or dishonor the ethics or the life which Christianity would effect as the final result of its doctrine and history. Some do this by asserting that Christianity is content with an orthodox creed, or an assent to the truth of a certain history; that it relies upon these as the arbitrary conditions or means of what it calls salvation, to the neglect or depreciation of ethical goodness. To all such representations or insinuations we reply, that those who make them have not derived their conceptions from Christ and the New Testament. Whatever may be the one-sided representations of so-called Christian teachers or Christian believers, or whatever may be the practical impressions conveyed by the abuses or corruptions of Christianity, these views of Christianity are so far from being authorized by Christ, that they are carefully disclaimed and most emphatically denounced by him as false and dangerous. We have no arguments for such as find all their objections to Christianity in

the caricatures which they draw from its fancied abuses by any influential Christian sect. Those who reject the Christian system merely from antagonism to what they call Calvinism, Evangelicalism, Methodism, Pietism, or Orthodoxy, have withdrawn themselves from the reach of the arguments derived from Christianity as taught by its Originator.

It is also objected, that the Christian ethics are one-sided, because they attach exclusive or at least an excessive importance to spiritual or religious duties, to the neglect of the duties between man and man: in other words, it is said that Christianity accepts religion, and places too little emphasis upon morality. The better system of religion which is to take its place is thus described: "There will be a new church founded on moral science, — at first cold and naked, a babe in a manger again, the algebra and mathematics of ethical law, the church of men to come, without shawms or psaltery or sackbut; but it will have heaven and earth for its beams and rafters, science for symbol and illustration; it will fast enough gather beauty, music, picture, poetry. Was never stoicism so stern and exigent as this shall be. It shall send man home to his central solitude, shame these social, supplicating manners, and make him know that much of the time he must have himself to his friend. He shall expect no co-operation, he shall walk with no companion. The nameless Thought, the nameless Power, the super-personal Heart, — he shall repose alone on that."*

The ground for this misconception is found in this,

* R. W. Emerson: *Conduct of Life*, vi.

that Christianity teaches that the duties from man to God are as binding and as sacred as the duties from man to man, and that it derives the most powerful motives to duty in both directions from the presence and the will of God. We grant that the ethics of Christianity are, in both of these senses, religious and spiritual. We not only concede that this is so, but we insist that this is one of their characteristic excellences, and the prime condition of their superior efficiency. But, in exalting religion, they do not depress morality between man and man in respect to its sacredness or its comparative importance. The satire and denunciations of Christ against those religionists who would dispense with morality are as discriminating and as severe as any which we find in any subsequent writer or in any modern sage.

A few attempts have been made to call in question the perfection of the example of Christian morality which is furnished in the life of Christ. We are told by Mr. F. W. Newman, that, if we would subject this life to as cool and critical a revision as that to which Mr. Grote has subjected the life of Socrates, we should discover manifold blemishes. Mr. Parker and others have ventured to suggest some signs of heat of temper and impatience. We have only to ask that those who read the life of Christ should treat him with the fairness, if they cannot with the fervor, which Mr. Grote bestows upon Socrates. Mr. Grote, usually the coolest of critics, is warmed into a mood of almost fervid admiration, notwithstanding the exceptions which he takes to the well-rounded perfection of the Athenian teacher. Let those who study Christ historically, endeavor, first of

all, to understand the circumstances in which he was placed ; let them remember, also, that the descriptions and records are incomplete. By observing these rules, they will find no difficulty in rising to a higher fervor of feeling at this wonder of self-denial, love, and truth — the Christ of the evangelists — than Socrates extorted from Mr. Grote by the study of Plato and Xenophon. Suggestions like those of Mr. Newman have not been often responded to. “The greatest of all heroes,” says Carlyle, “is One whom we do not name.” “Let sacred silence meditate that sacred matter.” Another, who is an open rejecter of Christianity, writes, “It is difficult, without exhausting superlatives even to unexpressive and wearisome satiety, to do justice to our intense love, reverence, and admiration for the character and teachings of Jesus. We regard him, not as the perfection of the intellectual or philosophic mind, but as the perfection of the spiritual character ; as surpassing all men at all times in the closeness and depth of his communion with the Father. In reading his sayings, we feel that we are holding converse with the wisest, purest, noblest Being that ever clothed thought in the poor language of humanity. In studying his life, we feel that we are following the footsteps of the highest ideal yet presented to us upon earth.” *

Most of the objections against the Christian ethics and the Christian life are founded upon its special rules, either as these are held to involve some defect in the ethical ideal, or the means of its realization. It is urged that many of the separate sayings of Christ

* W. R. Greg: *Creed of Christendom*, pp. 227, 228.

were not original, because maxims like them had been before expressed by pagan sages, or were already current among the Jewish rabbis. Thus it is contended that the Golden Rule, and some of the directions found in the Sermon on the Mount, had been uttered before ; and it is likely that the counterparts of many others may have been struck out by the wise moralists of different nations. The views of such critics in respect to what constitutes originality in ethics, and of what would prove supernatural wisdom and insight, would seem to be very crude. If nothing had been known or taught before Moses or Christ upon the duties between man and man, or between man and God, there would have been nothing to which either teacher could attach his doctrines, — nothing in the form of accepted moral truth to which either could appeal. Such a supposition is preposterous ; and the objector who rests his argument against the superior excellence of the Christian ethics on the imagined discovery that wise men before Christ, and in pagan schools, had taught some of the same precepts which he enforced, must themselves have either a very weak conception of the nature and authority of ethical truth, or a very low conception of the intellectual powers of the persons to whom they address their arguments. Christ did not profess that all his teachings were new in any such sense as these critics suppose. He expressly declares that the special duties which he inculcates were implied in the law given by Moses. It is rather on the number and aptness and novelty of certain comprehensive directions concerning those duties to which men were especially averse that he rests his claims to either novelty or originality. It is chiefly because

men were so strongly disinclined to see their duties in the light in which he represented them that his teachings were so original and novel. It is because he emphasized so many of these striking rules in respect to this class of duties; because he traced them up to their inner principle, and set them in contrast to the prevailing errors of the religious and moral guides of his time, and of all time except as taught by him; because he taught with authority, —that he makes good his claims to superhuman originality. More briefly stated, Christ is an original teacher of ethics, not because no other teacher has taught ethical truth as truly as he, nor because other teachers have not taught many of the same truths which he taught, but because he taught so many truths, so novel, so unexpected, and connected them by common principles which were at once profound and comprehensive, and because he effectually enforced them in the name of the perfect Father in heaven, and by the charms of his own spotless life.

It is urged, again, that Christianity does not enjoin every form and style of human excellence; that there are some classes of duties for which it does not provide, — for example, duties to the State, duties of honor, duties of courtesy and friendship, — many of which are derived from Greek and Roman, and not from Christian sources. J. S. Mill, in his “*Essay on Liberty*,” urges, “While, in the morality of the best Pagan nations, duty to the State holds even a disproportionate place, in purely Christian ethics that grand department of duty is scarcely noticed or acknowledged. It is in the Koran, not the New Testament, that we read the maxim, ‘A man who

appoints any man to an office, when there is in his dominions another man better qualified for it, sins against God and against the State.' ” The objection seems simply frivolous, and unworthy of a philosopher. It assumes that the Great Teacher professed to supply the world with a complete and systematic treatise upon the several classes of duties which were required in the times when he taught, or which might become necessary in subsequent generations. Nothing would seem to have been further from his intentions than to anticipate by special maxims all the new applications which would arise by the advanced and developed political and social condition of the human family, or even of the Christian community. Christ gave a few comprehensive directions to his followers, illustrated by striking examples, — some of them paradoxical or very extreme ; but both rules and examples were fitted to impress some fundamental principle, or some much-needed, because much-neglected, peculiarity of temper or act. He lived before his disciples a perfect life, — dropping from his lips countless golden sentences which were never written down, like that single one which Paul happened to think of, and Luke to record, “ It is more blessed to give than to receive,” — and finished this perfect life by a patient and self-sacrificing death under cruel ignominy and torture. To humanity he left the legacy of these teachings and this life ; and the force of neither has yet been exhausted. The question is not, whether Christ anticipated in form every question or rule of duty which might arise, — this he could not do unless the record of his teachings was to fill countless folios of casuistic directions, — but whether, in prin-

ciple and spirit, he did not in fact meet and provide for all these questions. This question is answered by the history of ethical thought and feeling in Christendom. We fearlessly ask, Has any exigency arisen in modern life, with all its refinements and complications, to which the spirit and principles of the Christian ethics have proved to be inadequate?

It cannot be objected that human experience has wrought out many special moral rules, and opened the way for many particular directions; and that, by the moulding influence of this experience, much of our present Christian morality has been shaped and perfected. This very fact illustrates the excellence and the universality of the teachings of Christ, — that they could give ethics a new spirit and profound principles, while they should not dispense with the aid of human experience for their development and perfection. It is the glory of these ethics, and their ample vindication, that they are able to take up and assimilate all that is taught or has been learned in any other school, whether ethnic or barbarous, whether Christian or infidel; that they can give welcome and find place for all that is learned in the schools of politics, civilization, or literature, and invest it with the interest and authority of Christian duty. Moreover, we cannot rightly understand Christian ethics unless we notice that the special directions and rules which were given by Christ and the apostles, so far as these are distinguished from comprehensive and universal principles, were given for the particular occasions which called them forth, and that they can only be fairly judged by a reference to those circum-

stances and exigencies. There is more meaning and importance than is always recognized in the generally accepted principle, that the special directions of the New Testament are of universal obligation in those cases only in which the circumstances are parallel.

It is more than hinted, however, that Christianity did not squarely and bravely meet the demands of its own time; that it was timid and time-serving in respect to practices which it was bound openly to reprove and denounce; that, in respect to slaveholding particularly, it evaded its duty. We cannot enter into this much-vexed question, and must content ourselves with saying that there is no sign of moral timidity in respect to other sins, opposition to which required the extremest courage. Not a few personal and social immoralities that were equally sanctioned by custom, and enforced by fashion, and hallowed by law and religion, were denounced with unflinching courage; and, even in respect to the conduct of the master to the slave, principles were broadly and boldly announced which were destructive of all the worst abuses of slavery, and tended to its extinction. How far social and civil relations modify the duties of external conduct has always been a delicate question in the purest and most elevated ethics; and the Christian ethics, so far as they are rules of external action, have not escaped, and could not escape, the same conditions. The Christian Church and the Christian sentiment of duty and right have certainly been most efficient in pushing the law of love to all possible reforms in the social and legal relations of the race. The spirit and law is as broad and as spiritual

as it ever was. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

No spirit of reform can be more radical and thorough-going than that of Paul in the words which we shall quote, while no words are more free from the cant and vulgarity, the vitriolic uncharity, and the fierce indecency, to which radicalism often misleads: "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness," i.e. of right living and doing, "which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

The discriminating boldness with which Christianity contends for the right of individual judgment in doubtful questions of external conduct, and the tolerance and charity which it exacts towards those who differ from ourselves, is marvellously original. If the recognition of this right is not supernatural in its origination, the practice of the corresponding duty has proved itself so far superhuman as not to be very general even among the best of Christians and the most sublimated of Rationalists and Radicals.

The motives employed in the Christian ethics and the Christian life have been the subject of frequent and persistent objections. From the days of the old Stoics down to those of their latest disciples of the newest modern school, the objection has been uniformly and persistently urged, that Christianity en-

courages holiness, and discourages sin, by appeals to selfish feelings and by the use of mercenary motives. The Platonic Shaftesbury, the utilitarian Mill, the categorical Kant, and the intuitional Parker, Cobbe, and Lecky, unite in this common reproach. It might suffice to say that the objection, if it holds at all, does not hold against Christianity alone, but against every description of religious motives which springs from the positive influence of a personal God.

But we may say more. Christianity does not in any sense set aside the attractions which belong to simple moral goodness, nor does it supersede the authority which is of right asserted by the conscience. These attractions it heartily recognizes; this authority it honors as supreme. It adds other motives indeed,—motives that are warm with personal sympathy, and sacred by the gratitude and loyalty that are owed to the Father of spirits and the Eternal King. These motives, in their turn, are sanctioned by the conscience, in that the Father whom we obey, and the Redeemer whom we love, are purity and goodness itself, commanding and exacting only that which is good. It should ever be remembered, that, as human, we are not self-sufficing, though we are subject to the conscience as supreme. We are made to revere, to worship, to trust, and to obey, not the “super-personal Heart,” but One who is no less personal than the dependent persons who exist in his likeness. As human, we seek his sympathy; we long for his friendship; “we thirst for God, for the living God;” and for this reason we require the personal motives which glow with so intense an energy in the human Christ, the manifested Word. But we are not there-

fore selfish because we are human; we are not mercenary because we acknowledge our dependence and confess our wants. That is the selfish soul, which, in hollow self-sufficingness, disdains to own its Father in heaven. He is mercenary who takes counsel of his godless pride; who bends the knee to no god save some magnificent nebulousity which owes all its attractions to the prismatic splendors that are borrowed from the sun which it obscures, but cannot supersede. The loving and humble Socrates, human in his playful irony and gentle affections, devout toward the deity whom he honored, was not half so selfish or sordid as the self-contained and self-sufficing Stoic who succeeded him, and proclaimed the wise man to be himself a king and god. It is the glory of the Christian ethics, that, while they are most unselfish in their disinterestedness, they are also intensely human and practical in their sympathies and their adaptations. The Christian life is better than every other,—not alone because its ideal is the highest, nor because its rules for attaining it are more profound and practical, but also because its motives and inspiration are personal in their attractiveness and energy.

But we appeal from theory to fact. Whatever we may conclude in respect to the nature and rank of the Christian ethics, we cannot deny that the personages and events of Christian history have been till now the most efficient forces in the service of a pure and unselfish life which man has as yet encountered. Even at the present, the events of the Christian history are universally retained as the best examples and symbols of the highest perfection by those who reject

or half receive this history as true. It is confidently predicted, that, in the future,

“ Whatsoe’er
The form of building, or the creed professed,
The cross — bold type of shame to homage turned,
Of an unfinished life that sways the world —
Shall tower as sovereign emblem over all.”

But why should the cross be destined to endure as the sole and sovereign emblem over all? It ought to have been long ago superseded, and the Martyr who hung upon it, by instances more striking and touching, if humanity has made the advances which are claimed either in its ideal or its achievements of perfection. There have been witnesses for ethical truth, by word and life, since the days of Jesus: if any have known or done better than he, they ought long ago to have taken his place as examples and symbols to the race. But that there has been or will be any symbol or enforcer of human duty and sacrifice which may supersede the Christian history, is not even claimed by those who reject this history as supernatural. They do not contemplate this to be possible. One of the sturdiest and the boldest of these rejecters disowns the very thought: “ With no hostility, then, towards Christ and Christianity, may the Theist renounce his faith in miracles and prophecy. Let all benefactors of mankind continue to look on Jesus as their forerunner in this great cause, and recognize a kindred mind in the Galilean who preached lessons of wisdom and benevolence in an early age of the world, and fell a sacrifice to the noble idea of introducing a kingdom of heaven upon earth. Let the

Good Samaritan still be cited as the example of humanity, the passover-supper be remembered as the farewell of Jesus to his friends, and God be worshipped under the character which he attributed to him, — the Father in heaven. Let painting and music still find solemn themes in the realities and fables relating to Jesus; let fasts and holy-days still take their names from the events of his life, our time be dated from his birth, and our temples be surmounted by his cross.” *

In like manner, it is felt and confessed that the chief truths of Christianity — those which set forth the fatherhood, the purity, and the compassion of God — have become the possession of the race, and sum up the absolute or the perfect religion; and that these were taught and enforced more thoroughly and efficiently by Jesus than by any one since his time. It is also conceded that these truths and this history, with all their abuses, are at this moment the strong if not the indispensable pillars of human morality, and even of civil order. The following, from Renan, is full of significance: “While we enjoy the liberty” [of thought and of science] “as sons of God, let us beware of contributing to that weakening of virtue which would threaten society if the force of Christianity should be enfeebled. What should we be without it? Who shall replace such schools of seriousness and reverence as the Saint Sulpice? — such a ministry of self-abnegation as that of the Sisters of Charity? How can we avoid being terrified at that aridness of emotion, and frivolity of aim, which are at present

* C. C. Hennel: *Christian Theism*, p. 18.

overrunning the world?" And again: "If Rationalism insists on governing the world without providing for the religious wants of man, the experience of the French Revolution interposes to warn us against the consequences of an error so fatal." *

Of the relation of this system to the heart of man, another rejecter of Christianity speaks in the following passionate language: "If any minds are drawn back" to Christianity by terror at the logical consequences of their negative position, "it is well: they are safe within their proper haven. Let them not quit the sheltering refuge meet for them; it is a home of blessed feeling, domestic to their hearts: nor let the self-exiled wanderers, either, be denied the welcome of guests, when they would fondly return to share the endeared associations of old familiar faith. Shut not up your feelings, Christians, nor your rites, against those in whose bosoms the silver cord is not yet broken which renders back the vibration of harmonic sympathy. Christianity is the true religion wherever feeling is predominant. While its tide is sweeping even occasionally over minds habitually differently constituted, no logic can prevent those which are the most convinced of its error from being Christians again." †

The proved efficiency, and the acknowledged necessity, of Christian truth and Christian history, to give effect to the Christian style of ethics and perfection, may well suggest the inquiry, whether Christianity as a life is not all that it claims to be. Any

* *Les Apôtres*, lxiii., lxiv.

† *Sara S. Hennel: Thoughts in Aid of Faith.*

inference to the contrary is shattered by the stubborn logic of the facts that have been illustrated in the history, and been accepted in the convictions, of all Christendom.

We have thus briefly touched upon most of the positions which have been taken by the modern assailants of Christianity. They have not succeeded in setting aside the force of its history, of its doctrines, or of its life, when considered independently. They have not succeeded in destroying the one by means of the other, — neither the history through the doctrines, nor the doctrines or the life through the history, nor the doctrines or the history through the life ; but, on the contrary, the assailant of either by the flank has been suddenly confronted by the whole line. The hammer has not been broken by the anvil, nor the anvil by the hammer ; but the hand has been paralyzed by the recoil of the stroke.

We have not considered any attempts to account for the union of these three superhuman features in one organism ; for such an attempt has never in form been made. The assailants of Christianity find ample occupation in dealing with any one of its leading features. The loose theory, that this extraordinary organism of history, doctrine, and life, was the product of a myth or a conscious imposition, one or both, — or partly one, and partly the other, — does not account for the presence of these separate elements of their system, least of all for their organic union and strength. It is broken upon the fact, that the Person who could give such a system life and force was too wise to be mistaken in respect to his own nature and position. If he

were honest and earnest enough to conceive and enforce such a life, he was too honest to be false in regard to himself or his relations to God and man. That he had the insight and forecast to discern, that, by his death of self-sacrifice, he should become the central force of human history, proves that he could not be mistaken; that he was willing to make the sacrifice, proves that he could not be false.

"It would have taken a Jesus to forge a Jesus," said Mr. Parker; i.e., even the Jesus whom Mr. Parker believed in, after eliminating the supernatural from the narrative of the evangelists. By the same rule, it would have taken the Jesus which the narrative recounts to forge the conception of the supernatural Christ. That such a Jesus *would not* have forged such claims is obvious.

Our argument is susceptible of still another application; and that is from the corruptions and abuses of Christianity. We might show how sadly and offensively Christianity has been abused as a history, a doctrine, and a life; how its history has been made a spectacle and a superstition, and faith in its historical events and personages has been substituted in place of the perfected character for which alone the history was enacted; how its truths have been mutilated, exaggerated, and caricatured in creeds and catechisms, and systems of theology; and how faith in a dogma, a creed, or a metaphysical shibboleth, has been practically enforced in place of loving confidence in the personal Saviour, and humble obedience to his teachings; how Christian perfection has been caricatured by the horrible asceticisms and the scandalous libertinisms that have been inferred from

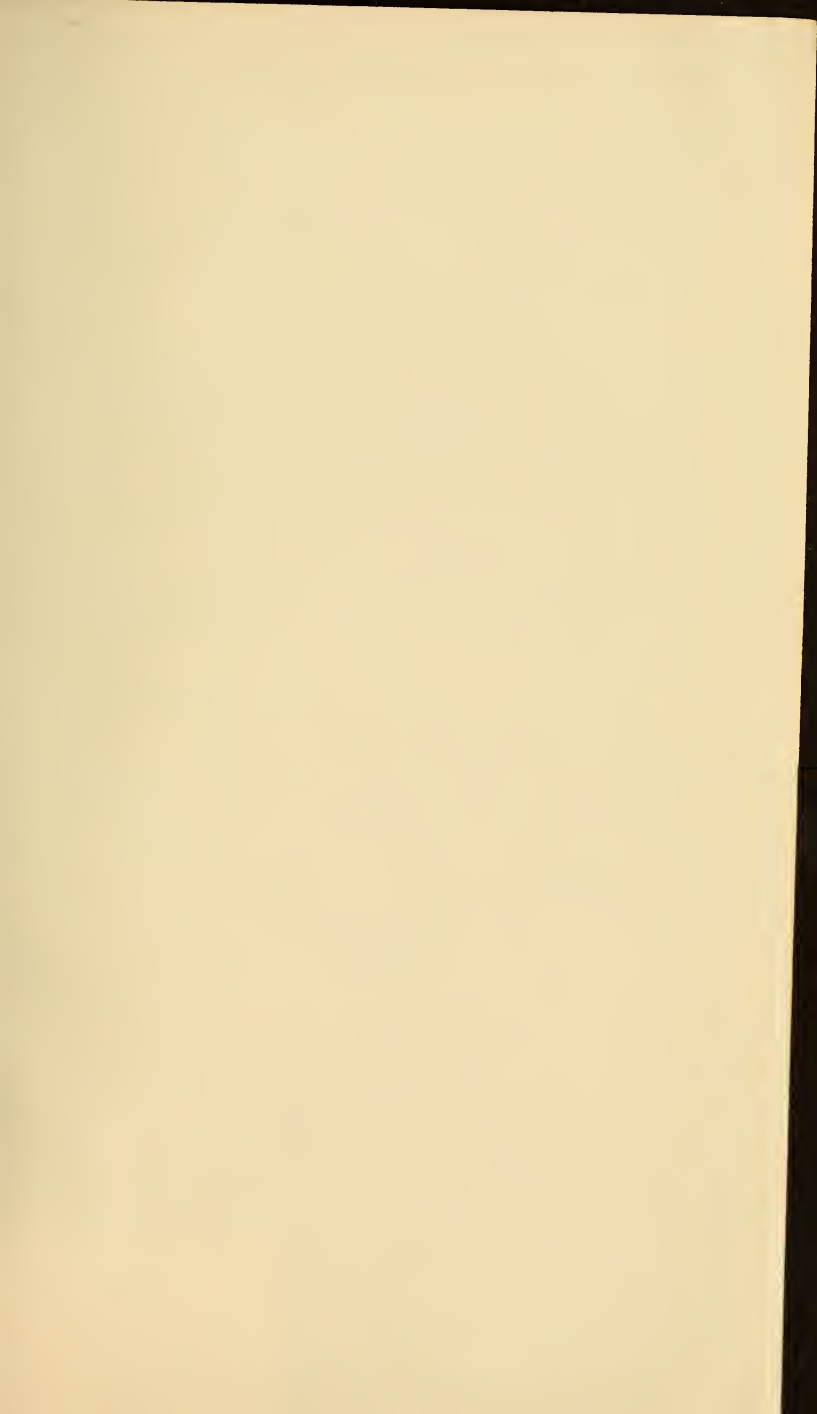
its cheerful humanity and its sensitive purity; and how, in consequence, Christianity itself has at times become an offence in the eyes of pagan, infidel, and Jew. And why did it not founder in its rottenness and incoherence? or, rather, why is it, that, of all the religions, Christianity alone has found within itself the means and the motives to its own reformation and revival? Simply, as we might show, because its history never could be so totally debased by processions, spectacles, or superstitions, as not always to suggest some wholesome truth, and some purifying and restraining duty; that its doctrines could never be so austere or so effeminate as to be incapable of some healthful manifestation of God; and its ethics, in their worst and their most licentious forms, could never wholly obscure the tender sympathy and the sober purity of the Christ of the Christian story. The action and the interaction of these three elements of the Christian system, as it might be shown, have, not unfrequently, been the salvation of the Christian cause.

But we have no space for the expansion of this part of our argument.

The argument suggests a single inference as to the practical attitude which Christianity assumes towards every human being whom it invites to faith in its truth. The end and aim of its provisions and its message are his purified and perfected moral life. This end can be effected only as he yields himself to the influences which are embodied in its doctrines and are illustrated in its history. That these truths may assist and control the man, they must be accepted by him as true; that the history may move and win

him, it must be received as a fact. For this reason, Christianity summons man to the duty of faith, because it is only by means of faith that he can receive its blessings. It is idle to speculate whether the character which it would form may not be attained by one who rejects its doctrines, and disbelieves its story. We may safely rest in the conclusion of Richard Baxter, that God will never cast off a soul that truly loveth him, while we ponder the words of the beloved disciple: "Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" To those earnest and elevated souls who long to believe, if they could; who, with the New-Testament story in their hands, and the history of Christianity to expound it, do not yet know what to make of its Christ,—we doubt not that the divine Master continues to say as of old, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that asketh of thee, Give me to drink, *thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*"

16



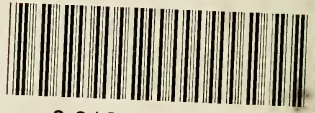
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